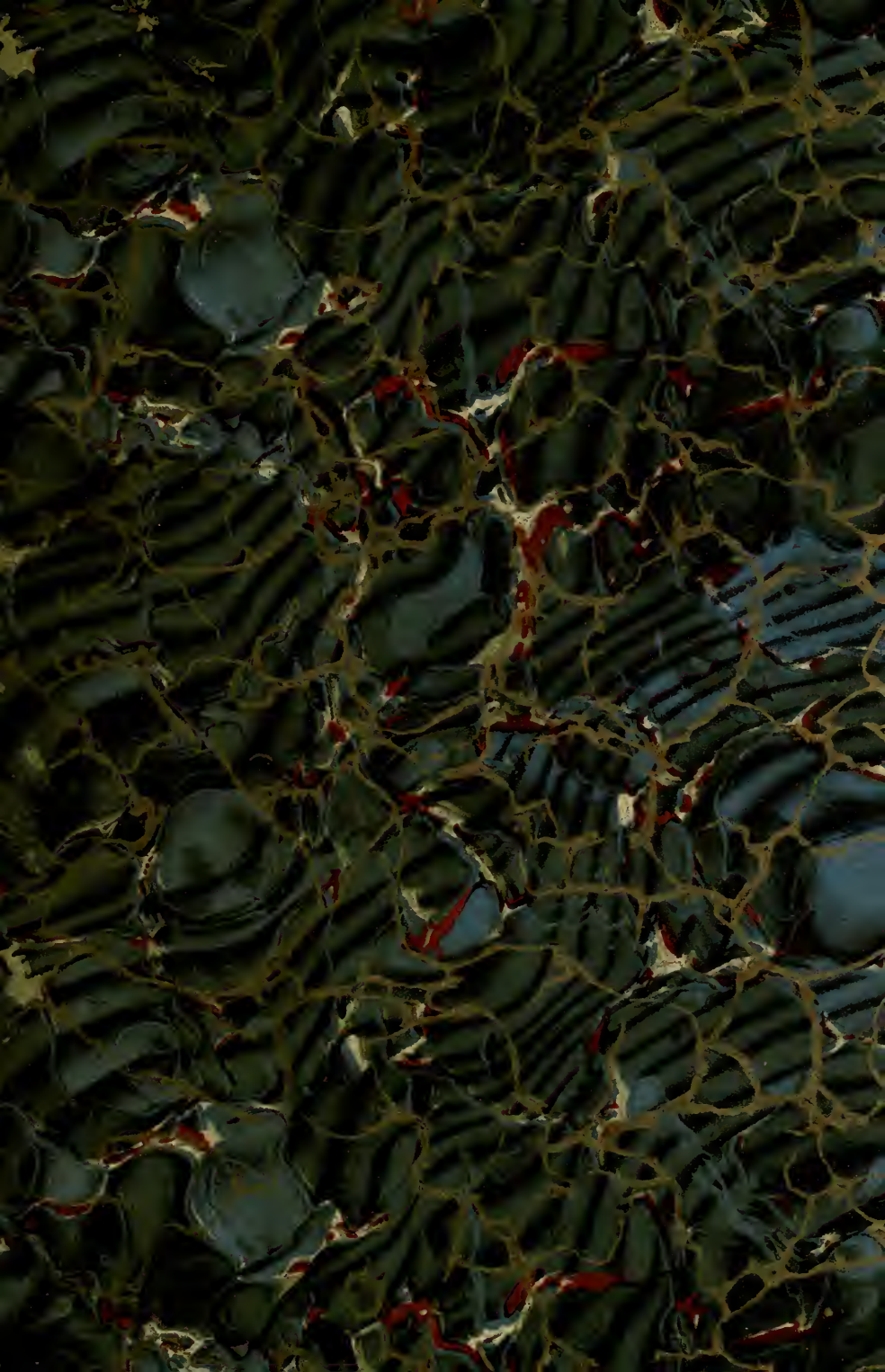
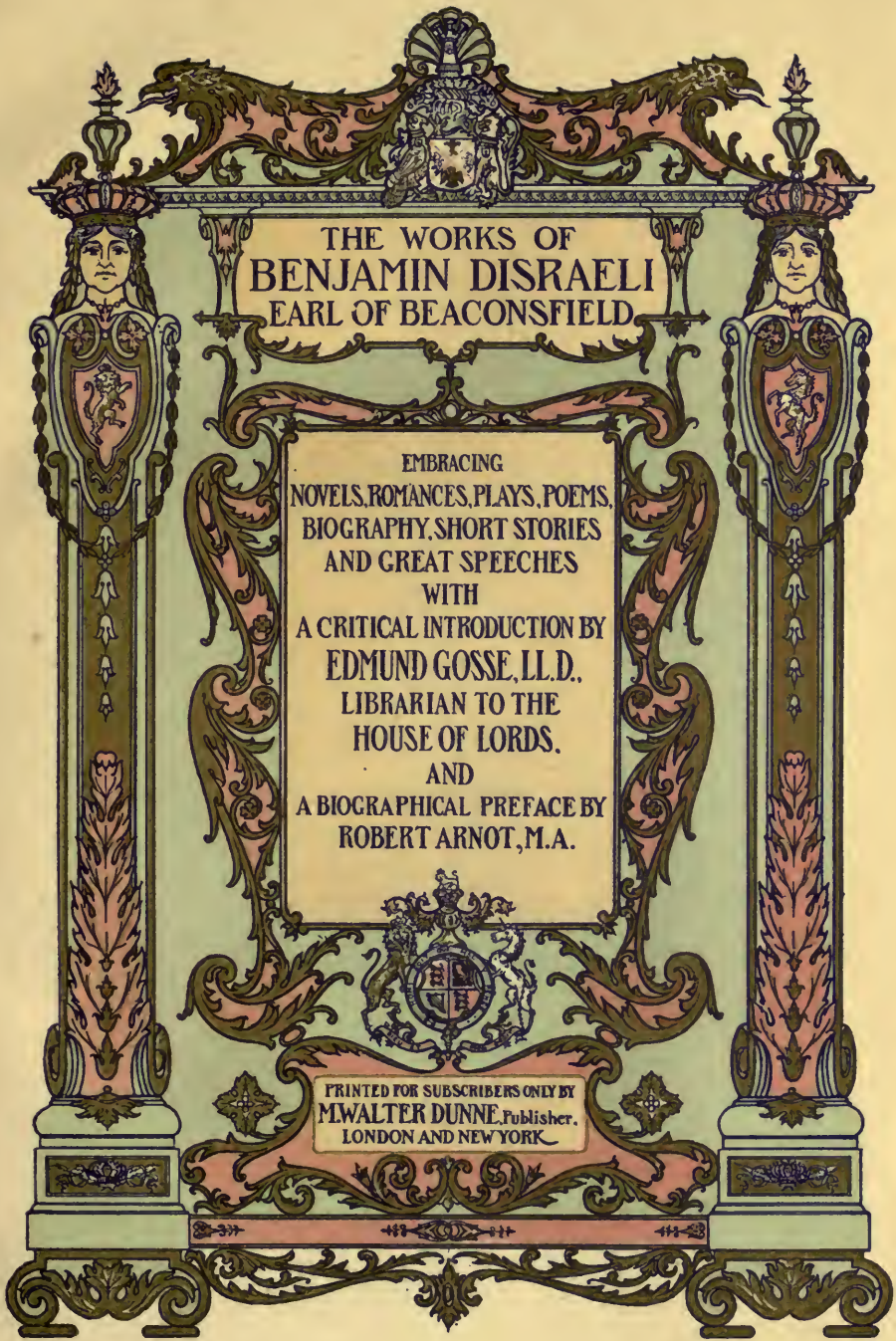
I am a heritage because I bring you years of thought and the lore of time — I impart yet I can not speak — I have traveled among the peoples of the earth — I am a rover — Oft-times I stray from the fireside of the one who loves and cherishes me - who misses me when I am gone — Should you find me vagrant please send me home - among my brothers - on the book shelves of .....

ALFRED SANTELL



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/worksofbenjamind17disriala


THE WORKS OF
BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD
EMBRACING
NOVELS, ROMANCES, PLAYS, POEMS,
BIOGRAPHY, SHORT STORIES
AND GREAT SPEECHES
WITH
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY
EDMUND GOSSE, LL.D.,
LIBRARIAN TO THE
HOUSE OF LORDS.
AND
A BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE BY
ROBERT ARNOT, M.A.
PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY BY
M. WALTER DUNNE, Publisher.
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Stack
Annex

Copyright, 1904, by M. Walter Dunne.

LOTHAIR

FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY HERMAN ROUNTREE.

'I know not a grander or a nobler career for a young man of talents and position in this age, than to be the champion and asserter of Divine truth.'

(See page 87.)

LOTHAIR

BY

BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

VOLUME I.

M. WALTER DUNNE
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Copyright, 1904, by
M. WALTER DUNNE

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London

Stack Annex
PR
4080
F04b
v.17

CONTENTS

LOTHAIR

CHAPTER I. PAGE
A NOBLE FAMILY 1
CHAPTER II.
EARLY DAYS OF LOTHAIR 5
CHAPTER III.
BRENTHAM CASTLE 8
CHAPTER IV.
DOLCE FAR NIENTE 11
CHAPTER V.
A SUDDEN PROPOSAL 15
CHAPTER VI.
A PRINCE OF THE CHURCH 22
CHAPTER VII.
COUNSEL AND CLIENT 29
CHAPTER VIII.
A STRANGE FACE 36
CHAPTER IX.
A LIVELY DINNER 44
CHAPTER X.
'À BAS LES PRÊTRES!' 53

PAGE

CHAPTER XI.
THE HOLY ALLIANCE OF PEOPLES 57

CHAPTER XII.
GENTLE PERSUASION 62

CHAPTER XIII.
THE CASTLE OF VAUXE 68

CHAPTER XIV.
THE TENEBRÆ 72

CHAPTER XV.
MONSIGNORE CATESBY 76

CHAPTER XVI.
A FAIR DEVOTEE 81

CHAPTER XVII.
A FLATTERING SUGGESTION 85

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. CLARE 91

CHAPTER XIX.
UNCERTAINTY 98

CHAPTER XX.
THE LADY CORISANDE 101

CHAPTER XXI.
LOTHAIR ENTERS SOCIETY 106

CHAPTER XXII.
A FLYING TRIP TO OXFORD 114

CHAPTER XXIII.
BEAUTY IN DISTRESS 119

CHAPTER XXIV.
THE OXFORD PROFESSOR 123

CHAPTER XXV.
A NEW DIVINITY 128

PAGE

CHAPTER XXVI.
'IS IT A DREAM?' 132

CHAPTER XXVII.
A NEW ASPECT OF LIFE 136

CHAPTER XXVIII.
A CASTLE IN THE AIR 146

CHAPTER XXIX.
THE CHARMS OF BELMONT 162

CHAPTER XXX.
LOTHAIR DISAPPOINTS THE MONSIGNORE . 172

CHAPTER XXXI.
THEODORA'S CREED 188

CHAPTER XXXII.
MIRANDOLA 201

CHAPTER XXXIII.
A ROPE OF PEARLS 209

CHAPTER XXXIV.
AN EMBARRASSING CHARGE 216

CHAPTER XXXV.
HERO AND LEANDER 223

CHAPTER XXXVI.
AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER 229

CHAPTER XXXVII.
MURIEL TOWERS 234

CHAPTER XXXVIII.
LOTHAIR'S PERPLEXITIES 240

CHAPTER XXXIX.
NOBLE GUESTS 246

CHAPTER XL.
ENCHANTED WANDERINGS 252

PAGE

CHAPTER XLI.
THEODORA VISITS THE TOWERS 255

CHAPTER XLII.
THREE GRACES 263

CHAPTER XLIII.
MYSTERIOUS HINTS 273

CHAPTER XLIV.
PRIESTLY PLOTS 277

CHAPTER XLV.
A PAIR OF CONFIDANTES 287

CHAPTER XLVI.
ST. ALDEGONDE SHOCKS THE BISHOP . . 298

CHAPTER XLVII.
THE DAY OF REJOICING 306

CHAPTER XLVIII.
GHOSTLY COUNSEL 313

CHAPTER XLIX.
THEODORA'S CONFIDENCES 324

CHAPTER L.
NEWS ABOUT GARIBALDI 331

CHAPTER LI.
LOTHAIR AS CAPTAIN MURIEL 340

CHAPTER LII.
THE CAMP IN THE APENNINES 347

CHAPTER LIII.
A CHARMING SECRETARY 352

CHAPTER LIV.
MADRE NATURA 358

CHAPTER LV.
A PATRIOTIC PILGRIMAGE 365

PAGE

CHAPTER LVI.
ROMOLO COLONNA 369

CHAPTER LVII.
THE HYMN OF ROMAN LIBERTY 375

CHAPTER LVIII.
'BROTHERS! TO ROME!' 381

CHAPTER LIX.
A SOLEMN PROMISE 386

CHAPTER LX.
THE MEETING AT ROME 391

CHAPTER LXI.
JESUITIC INFLUENCE 397

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

'I KNOW NOT A GRANDER OR A NOBLER CAREER FOR A YOUNG MAN OF TALENTS AND POSITION IN THIS AGE, THAN TO BE THE CHAMPION AND ASSERTER OF DIVINE TRUTH.' (See page 87) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

'I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT I HAD A LETTER TO DELIVER TO YOU.' 186

'I AM THE RIGHT PERSON FOR YOU TO APPEAL TO — THE ONLY PERSON.' 330

TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUKE OF AUMALE

WITH

RESPECT AND AFFECTION

GENERAL PREFACE

An American gentleman, with more than courtesy, has forwarded to me a vast number of notices of *Lothair* which have appeared in the leading journals of his country. He tells me that, irrespective of literary 'organs,' there are in the Union five thousand newspapers, and it is not impossible that some notice of *Lothair* might appear in each of these. However various may be the opinions of those which I thus possess, they appear to me generally to be sincere, and in point of literary ability, taste, style, and critical acumen, I think they need not fear competition with the similar productions of our own land.

My English publishers also have made a collection of the notices of this work in our own country, and though we have not yet five thousand newspapers, the aggregate of articles is in amount perhaps unprecedented. I have nothing to complain of in their remarks. One could hardly expect at home the judicial impartiality of a foreign land. Personal influences inevitably mingle in some degree with such productions. There are critics who, abstractedly, do not approve of successful books, particularly if they have failed in the same style; social acquaintances also of lettered taste, and especially cotemporaries whose public life

has not exactly realised the vain dreams of their fussy existence, would seize the accustomed opportunity of welcoming with affected discrimination about nothing, and elaborate controversy about trifles, the production of a friend; and there is always, both in politics and literature, the race of the Dennises, the Oldmixons, and Curls, who flatter themselves that, by systematically libelling some eminent personage of their times, they have a chance of descending to posterity.

A distinguished individual has suggested that, in a preface to this edition of my collected works, I might give my own views of the purport of *Lothair*. It strikes me, with all deference, that it would be not a little presumptuous for an author thus to be the self-critic of volumes which appeared only a few months ago. Their purport to the writer seems clear enough, and as they have been more extensively read both by the people of the United Kingdom and the United States than any work that has appeared for the last half century, I will even venture to assume that on this point they are of the same opinion as myself.

But on some other works, the youngest of which were written a quarter of a century ago, it would perhaps be in me not impertinent now to make a few remarks. *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred* form a real Trilogy; that is to say, they treat of the same subject, and endeavour to complete that treatment. The origin and character of our political parties, their influence on the condition of the people of this country, some picture of the moral and physical condition of that people, and some intimation of the means by which it might be elevated and improved, were themes which had long engaged my meditation.

Born in a library, and trained from early childhood by learned men who did not share the passions and the prejudices of our political and social life, I had imbibed on some subjects conclusions different from those which generally prevail, and especially with reference to the history of our own country. How an oligarchy had been substituted for a kingdom, and a narrow-minded and bigoted fanaticism flourished in the name of religious liberty, were problems long to me insoluble, but which early interested me. But what most attracted my musing, even as a boy, was the elements of our political parties, and the strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular.

What has mainly led to this confusion of public thought and this uneasiness of society is our habitual carelessness in not distinguishing between the excellence of a principle and its injurious or obsolete application. The feudal system may have worn out, but its main principle, that the tenure of property should be the fulfilment of duty, is the essence of good government. The divine right of kings may have been a plea for feeble tyrants, but the divine right of government is the keystone of human progress, and without it governments sink into police, and a nation is degraded into a mob.

National institutions were the ramparts of the multitude against large estates exercising political power derived from a limited class. The Church was in theory, and once it had been in practice, the spiritual and intellectual trainer of the people. The privileges of the multitude and the prerogatives of the Sovereign had grown up together, and together they had waned.

Under the plea of liberalism, all the institutions which were the bulwarks of the multitude had been sapped and weakened, and nothing had been substituted for them. The people were without education, and, relatively to the advance of science, and the comfort of the superior classes, their condition had deteriorated, and their physical quality as a race was threatened. Those who in theory were the national party, and who sheltered themselves under the institutions of the country against the oligarchy, had, both by a misconception and a neglect of their duties, become, and justly become, odious; while the oligarchy, who had mainly founded themselves on the plunder of the popular estate, either in the shape of the possessions of the Church or the domains of the Crown, had by the patronage of certain general principles which they only meagrely applied, assumed, and to a certain degree acquired, the character of a popular party. But no party was national: one was exclusive and odious, and the other liberal and cosmopolitan.

The perverse deviation of political parties from their original significance may at first sight seem only a subject of historical curiosity, but they assume a different character when they practically result in the degradation of a people.

To change back the oligarchy into a generous aristocracy round a real throne; to infuse life and vigour into the Church, as the trainer of the nation, by the revival of Convocation, then dumb, on a wide basis, and not, as has been since done, in the shape of a priestly section; to establish a commercial code on the principles successfully negotiated by Lord Bolingbroke at Utrecht, and which, though baffled at the time by a Whig Parliament, were subsequently

and triumphantly vindicated by his political pupil and and heir, Mr. Pitt; to govern Ireland according to the policy of Charles I. and not of Oliver Cromwell; to emancipate the political constituency of 1832 from its sectarian bondage and contracted sympathies; to elevate the physical as well as the moral condition of the people, by establishing that labour required regulation as much as property; and all this rather by the use of ancient forms and the restoration of the past than by political revolutions founded on abstract ideas, appeared to be the course which the circumstances of this country required, and which, practically speaking, could only, with all their faults and backslidings, be undertaken and accomplished by a reconstructed Tory Party.

When I attempted to enter public life, I expressed these views, long meditated, to my countrymen, but they met with little encouragement. He who steps out of the crowd is listened to with suspicion or with heedlessness: and forty years ago there prevailed a singular ignorance of the political history of our country. I had no connection either in the press or in public life. I incurred the accustomed penalty of being looked on as a visionary, and what I knew to be facts were treated as paradoxes.

Ten years afterwards affairs had changed. I had been some time in Parliament and had friends who had entered public life with myself, and who listened always with interest and sometimes with sympathy to views which I had never ceased to enforce. Living much together, without combination we acted together. Some of those who were then my companions have, like myself, since taken some part in the conduct of public affairs: two of them, and those

who were not the least interested in our speculations, have departed. One was George Smythe, afterwards seventh Lord Strangford, a man of brilliant gifts, of dazzling wit, infinite culture, and fascinating manners. His influence over youth was remarkable, and he could promulgate a new faith with graceful enthusiasm. Henry Hope, the eldest son of the author of *Anastasius*, was of a different nature, but he was learned and accomplished, possessed a penetrating judgment and an inflexible will. Master of a vast fortune, his house naturally became our frequent rendezvous; and it was at the Deepdene that he first urged the expediency of my treating in a literary form those views and subjects which were the matter of our frequent conversation.

This was the origin of *Coningsby: or, the New Generation*, which I commenced under his roof, and which I inscribed to his name.

The derivation and character of political parties; the condition of the people which had been the consequence of them; the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state; were the three principal topics which I intended to treat, but I found they were too vast for the space I had allotted to myself.

These were all launched in *Coningsby* but the origin and condition of political parties, the first portion of the theme, was the only one completely handled in that work.

Next year (1845) in *Sybil: or, the Two Nations,* I considered the condition of the people, and the whole work, generally speaking, was devoted to that portion of my scheme. At that time the Chartist agitation was still fresh in the public memory, and its

repetition was far from improbable. I had mentioned to my friend, the late Thomas Duncombe, and who was my friend before I entered the House of Commons, something of what I was contemplating; and he offered and obtained for my perusal the whole of the correspondence of Feargus O'Connor when conductor of the *Northern Star* with the leaders and chief actors of the Chartist movement. I had visited and observed with care all the localities introduced; and as an accurate and never exaggerated picture of a remarkable period in our domestic history, and of a popular organisation which in its extent and completeness has perhaps never been equalled, the pages of *Sybil* may, I venture to believe, be consulted with confidence.

In recognising the Church as a powerful agent in the previous development of England, and possibly the most efficient means of that renovation of the national spirit which was desired, it seemed to me that the time had arrived when it became my duty to ascend to the origin of that great ecclesiastical corporation, and consider the position of the descendants of that race who had been the founders of Christianity. Some of the great truths of ethnology were necessarily involved in such discussions. Familiar as we all are now with such themes, the house of Israel being now freed from the barbarism of mediæval misconception, and judged, like all other races, by their contributions to the existing sum of human welfare, and the general influence of race on human action being universally recognised as the key of history, the difficulty and hazard of touching for the first time on such topics cannot now be easily appreciated. But public opinion recognised both the truth and sincerity of

these views, and, with its sanction, in *Tancred: or, the New Crusade*, the third portion of the Trilogy, I completed their development.

It will be seen that the general spirit of these productions ran counter to the views which had been long prevalent in England, and which may be popularly, though not altogether accurately, described as utilitarian. They recognised imagination in the government of nations as a quality not less important than reason. They trusted much to a popular sentiment, which rested on an heroic tradition and was sustained by the high spirit of a free aristocracy. Their economic principles were not unsound, but they looked upon the health and knowledge of the multitude as not the least precious part of the wealth of nations. In asserting the doctrine of race, they were entirely opposed to the equality of man, and similar abstract dogmas, which have destroyed ancient society without creating a satisfactory substitute. Resting on popular sympathies and popular privileges, they held that no society could be durable unless it was built upon the principles of loyalty and religious reverence.

The writer and those who acted with him looked, then, upon the Anglican Church as a main machinery by which these results might be realised. There were few great things left in England, and the Church was one. Nor do I now doubt that if, a quarter of a century ago, there had arisen a churchman equal to the occasion, the position of ecclesiastical affairs in this country would have been very different from that which they now occupy. But these great matters fell into the hands of monks and schoolmen; and little more than a year after the publication of *Coningsby*,

the secession of Dr. Newman dealt a blow to the Church of England under which it still reels. That extraordinary event has been 'apologised' for, but has never been explained. It was a mistake and a misfortune. The tradition of the Anglican Church was powerful. Resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee, it would have found that rock of truth which Providence, by the instrumentality of the Semitic race, had promised to St. Peter. Instead of that, the seceders sought refuge in mediæval superstitions, which are generally only the embodiments of pagan ceremonies and creeds.

It cannot be denied that the aspect of the world and this country, to those who have faith in the spiritual nature of man, is at this time dark and distressful. They listen to doubts, and even denials, of an active Providence; what is styled Materialism is in the ascendant. To those who believe that an atheistical society, though it may be polished and amiable, involves the seeds of anarchy, the prospect is full of gloom.

This disturbance in the mind of nations has been occasioned by two causes: first, by the powerful assault on the divinity of the Semitic literature by the Germans, and, secondly, by recent discoveries of science, which are hastily supposed to be inconsistent with our long-received convictions as to the relations between the Creator and the created.

One of the consequences of the Divine government of this world, which has ordained that the sacred purposes should be effected by the instrumentality of various human races, must be occasionally a jealous discontent with the revelation entrusted to a particular family. But there is no reason to believe that the

Teutonic rebellion of this century against the Divine truths entrusted to the Semites will ultimately meet with more success than the Celtic insurrection of the preceding age. Both have been sustained by the highest intellectual gifts that human nature has ever displayed; but when the tumult subsides, the Divine truths are found to be not less prevalent than before, and simply because they are divine. Man brings to the study of the oracles more learning and more criticism than of yore: and it is well that it should be so. The documents will yet bear a greater amount both of erudition and examination than they have received; but the word of God is eternal, and will survive the spheres.

The sceptical effects of the discoveries of science, and the uneasy feeling that they cannot co-exist with our old religious convictions, have their origin in the circumstance that the general body who have suddenly become conscious of these physical truths are not so well acquainted as is desirable with the past history of man. Astonished by their unprepared emergence from ignorance to a certain degree of information, their amazed intelligence takes refuge in the theory of what is conveniently called progress, and every step in scientific discovery seems further to remove them from the path of primæval inspiration. But there is no fallacy so flagrant as to suppose that the modern ages have the peculiar privilege of scientific discovery, or that they are distinguished as the epochs of the most illustrious inventions. On the contrary, scientific invention has always gone on simultaneously with the revelation of spiritual truths; and more, the greatest discoveries are not those of modern ages. No one for a moment can pretend

that printing is so great a discovery as writing, or algebra as language. What are the most brilliant of our chymical discoveries compared with the invention of fire and the metals? It is a vulgar belief that our astronomical knowledge dates only from the recent century when it was rescued from the monks who imprisoned Galileo; but Hipparchus, who lived before our Divine Master, and who among other sublime achievements discovered the precession of the equinoxes, ranks with the Newtons and the Keplers; and Copernicus, the modern father of our celestial science, avows himself, in his famous work, as only the champion of Pythagoras, whose system he enforces and illustrates. Even the most modish schemes of the day on the origin of things, which captivate as much by their novelty as their truth, may find their precursors in ancient sages, and after a careful analysis of the blended elements of imagination and induction which characterise the new theories, they will be found mainly to rest on the atom of Epicurus and the monad of Thales. Scientific, like spiritual, truth has ever from the beginning been descending from Heaven to man. He is a being who organically demands direct relations with his Creator, and he would not have been so organised if his requirements could not be satisfied. We may analyse the sun and penetrate the stars, but man is conscious that he is made in God's own image, and in his perplexity he will ever appeal to our Father which art in Heaven.

I had been in Parliament seven years when this Trilogy was published, and during that period I had not written anything; but in 1837, the year I entered the House of Commons, I had published two works, *Henrtetta Temple* and *Venetia* These are not po-

litical works; but they would commemorate feelings more enduring than public passions, and they were written with care, and some delight. They were inscribed to two friends, the best I ever had, and not the least gifted. One was the inimitable D'Orsay, the most accomplished and the most engaging character that has figured in this century, who, with the form and universal genius of an Alcibiades, combined a brilliant wit and a heart of quick affection, and who, placed in a public position, would have displayed a courage, a judgment, and a commanding intelligence which would have ranked him with the leaders of mankind. The other was one who had enjoyed that public opportunity which had been denied to Comte D'Orsay. The world has recognised the political courage, the versatile ability, and the masculine eloquence of Lord Lyndhurst; but his intimates only were acquainted with the tenderness of his disposition, the sweetness of his temper, his ripe scholarship, and the playfulness of his bright and airy spirit.

And here I cannot refrain from mentioning that in 1837 I accompanied Lord Lyndhurst to Kensington Palace, when, on the accession of the Queen, the peers and privy councillors and chief personages of the realm pledged their fealty to their new Sovereign. He was greatly affected by the unusual scene: a youthful maiden receiving the homage of her subjects, most of them illustrious, in a palace in a garden, and all with a sweet and natural dignity. He gave me, as we drove home, an animated picture of what had occurred in the Presence Chamber, marked by all that penetrating observation, and happy terseness of description which distinguished him. Eight years afterwards, with my memory still under the influence of

his effective narrative, I reproduced the scene in *Sybil*, and I feel sure it may be referred to for its historical accuracy.

There was yet a barren interval of five years of my life, so far as literature was concerned, between the publication of *Henrietta Temple*, and *Venetia*, and my earlier works. In 1832 I had published *Coutarini Fleming* and *Alroy*. I had then returned from two years of travel in the Mediterranean regions, and I published *Contarini Fleming* anonymously, and in the midst of a revolution. It was almost still-born, and having written it with deep thought and feeling, I was naturally discouraged from further effort. Yet the youthful writer who may, like me, be inclined to despair, may learn also from my example not to be precipitate in his resolves. Gradually *Contarini Fleming* found sympathising readers; Goethe and Beckford were impelled to communicate their unsolicited opinions of this work to its anonymous author, and I have seen a criticism on it by Heine, of which any writer might be justly proud. Yet all this does not prevent me from being conscious that it would have been better if a subject so essentially psychological had been treated at a more mature period of life.

I had commenced *Alroy* the year after my first publication, and had thrown the manuscript aside. Being at Jerusalem in the year 1831, and visiting the traditionary tombs of the kings, my thoughts recurred to the marvellous career which had attracted my boyhood, and I shortly after finished a work which I began the year after I wrote *Vivian Grey*. D.

HUGHENDEN MANOR:
October, 1870.

KEY TO THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN LOTHAIR

The Oxford Professor	Professor Goldwin Smith
Grandison	Cardinal Manning
Lothair	Marquis of Bute
Catesby	Monsignore Capel
The Duke and Duchess	Duke and Duchess of Abercorn
The Bishop	Bishop Samuel Wilberforce
Corisande	Lady Anne Hamilton

LOTHAIR

CHAPTER I.

A Noble Family.

REMEMBER him a little boy,' said the Duchess, 'a pretty little boy, but very shy. His mother brought him to us one day. She was a dear friend of mine; you know she was one of my bridesmaids?'

'And you have never seen him since, mamma?' enquired a married daughter, who looked like the younger sister of her mother.

'Never; he was an orphan shortly after: I have often reproached myself, but it is so difficult to see boys. Then, he never went to school, but was brought up in the Highlands with a rather savage uncle; and if he and Bertram had not become friends at Christchurch, I do not well see how we ever could have known him.'

These remarks were made in the morning-room of Brentham, where the mistress of the mansion sat surrounded by her daughters, all occupied with various works. One knitted a purse, another adorned a

slipper, a third emblazoned a page. Beautiful forms in counsel leant over frames glowing with embroidery, while two fair sisters more remote occasionally burst into melody, as they tried the passages of a new air, which had been communicated to them in the manuscript of some devoted friend.

The Duchess, one of the greatest heiresses of Britain, singularly beautiful, and gifted with native grace, had married in her teens one of the wealthiest and most powerful of our nobles, and scarcely older than herself. Her husband was as distinguished for his appearance and his manners as his bride, and those who speculate on race were interested in watching the development of their progeny, who in form, and colour, and voice, and manner, and mind were a reproduction of their parents, who seemed only the elder brother and sister of a gifted circle. The daughters with one exception came first, and all met the same fate. After seventeen years of a delicious home they were presented, and immediately married; and all to personages of high consideration. After the first conquest this fate seemed as regular as the order of nature. Then came a son, who was now at Christchurch and then several others, some at school, and some scarcely out of the nursery. There was one daughter unmarried, and she was to be presented next season. Though the family likeness was still apparent in Lady Corisande, in general expression she differed from her sisters. They were all alike with their delicate aquiline noses, bright complexions, short upper lips, and eyes of sunny light. The beauty of Lady Corisande was even more distinguished and more regular, but whether it were the effect of her dark-brown hair or darker eyes, her countenance had not the

lustre of the rest, and its expression was grave and perhaps pensive.

The Duke, though still young, and naturally of a gay and joyous temperament, had a high sense of duty, and strong domestic feelings. He was never wanting in his public place, and he was fond of his wife and his children; still more proud of them. Every day when he looked into the glass, and gave the last touch to his consummate toilette, he offered his grateful thanks to Providence that his family was not unworthy of him.

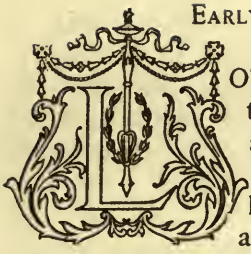
His Grace was accustomed to say that he had only one misfortune, and it was a great one; he had no home. His family had married so many heiresses, and he, consequently, possessed so many halls and castles, at all of which, periodically, he wished, from a right feeling, to reside, that there was no sacred spot identified with his life in which his heart, in the bustle and tumult of existence, could take refuge. Brentham was the original seat of his family, and he was even passionately fond of it; but it was remarkable how very short a period of his yearly life was passed under its stately roof. So it was his custom always to repair to Brentham the moment the season was over, and he would exact from his children, that, however short might be the time, they would be his companions under those circumstances. The daughters loved Brentham, and they loved to please their father; but the sons-in-law, though they were what is called devoted to their wives, and, unusual as it may seem, scarcely less attached to their legal parents, did not fall very easily into his arrangement. The country in August without sport was unquestionably to them a severe trial: nevertheless, they rarely omitted

making their appearance, and if they did occasionally vanish, sometimes to Cowes, sometimes to Switzerland, sometimes to Norway, they always wrote to their wives, and always alluded to their immediate or approaching return; and their letters gracefully contributed to the fund of domestic amusement.

And yet it would be difficult to find a fairer scene than Brentham offered, especially in the lustrous effulgence of a glorious English summer. It was an Italian palace of freestone; vast, ornate, and in scrupulous condition; its spacious and graceful chambers filled with treasures of art, and rising itself from statued and stately terraces. At their foot spread a gardened domain of considerable extent, bright with flowers, dim with coverts of rare shrubs, and musical with fountains. Its limit reached a park, with timber such as the midland counties only can produce. The fallow deer trooped among its ferny solitudes and gigantic oaks; but beyond the waters of the broad and winding lake the scene became more savage, and the eye caught the dark form of the red deer on some jutting mount, shrinking with scorn from communion with his gentler brethren.

CHAPTER II.

Early Days of Lothair.



OTHAIR was the little boy whom the Duchess remembered. He was a posthumous child, and soon lost a devoted mother. His only relation was one of his two guardians, a Scotch noble, a Presbyterian and a Whig. This uncle was a widower with some children, but they were girls, and, though Lothair was attached to them, too young to be his companions. Their father was a keen, hard man, honourable and just, but with no softness of heart or manner. He guarded with precise knowledge and with unceasing vigilance Lothair's vast inheritance, which was in many counties and in more than one kingdom; but he educated him in a Highland home, and when he had reached boyhood thought fit to send him to the High School of Edinburgh. Lothair passed a monotonous if not a dull life; but he found occasional solace in the scenes of a wild and beautiful nature, and delight in all the sports of the field and forest, in which he was early initiated and completely indulged. Although an Englishman, he was fifteen before he revisited his country, and then his glimpses of England were brief, and to him scarcely satisfactory. He was

hurried sometimes to vast domains, which he heard were his own; and sometimes whisked to the huge metropolis, where he was shown St. Paul's and the British Museum. These visits left a vague impression of bustle without kindness, and exhaustion without excitement; and he was glad to get back to his glens, to the moor and the mountain-stream.

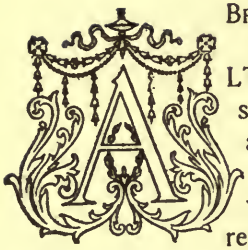
His father, in the selection of his guardians, had not contemplated this system of education. While he secured, by the appointment of his brother-in-law, the most competent and trustworthy steward of his son's fortune, he had depended on another for that influence which should mould the character, guide the opinions, and form the tastes of his child. The other guardian was a clergyman, his father's private tutor and heart-friend; scarcely his parent's senior, but exercising over him irresistible influence, for he was a man of shining talents and abounding knowledge, brilliant and profound. But unhappily, shortly after Lothair became an orphan, this distinguished man seceded from the Anglican communion, and entered the Church of Rome. From this moment there was war between the guardians. The uncle endeavoured to drive his colleague from the trust: in this he failed, for the priest would not renounce his office. The Scotch noble succeeded, however, in making it a fruitless one: he thwarted every suggestion that emanated from the obnoxious quarter; and indeed the secret reason of the almost constant residence of Lothair in Scotland, and of his harsh education, was the fear of his relative, that the moment he crossed the border he might, by some mysterious process, fall under the influence that his guardian so much dreaded and detested.

There was, however, a limit to these severe precautions even before Lothair should reach his majority. His father had expressed in his will that his son should be educated at the University of Oxford, and at the same college of which he had been a member. His uncle was of opinion he complied with the spirit of this instruction by sending Lothair to the University of Edinburgh, which would give the last tonic to his moral system; and then commenced a celebrated chancery suit, instituted by the Roman Catholic guardian, in order to enforce a literal compliance with the educational condition of the will. The uncle looked upon this movement as a Popish plot, and had recourse to every available allegation and argument to baffle it, but ultimately in vain. With every precaution to secure his Protestant principles, and to guard against the influence, or even personal interference, of his Roman Catholic guardian, the Lord Chancellor decided that Lothair should be sent to Christchurch.

Here Lothair, who had never been favoured with a companion of his own age and station, soon found a congenial one in the heir of Brentham. Inseparable in pastime, not dissociated even in study, sympathising companionship soon ripened into fervent friendship. They lived so much together that the idea of separation became not only painful but impossible; and, when vacation arrived, and Brentham was to be visited by its future lord, what more natural than that it should be arranged that Lothair should be a visitor to his domain?

CHAPTER III.

Brentham Castle.



LTHOUGH Lothair was the possessor of as many palaces and castles as the Duke himself, it is curious that his first dinner at Brentham was almost his introduction into refined society. He had been a guest at the occasional banquets of his uncle, but these were festivals of the Picts and Scots, rude plenty and coarse splendour, with noise instead of conversation, and a tumult of obstructive dependents, who, impeded, by their want of skill, the very convenience which they were purposed to facilitate. How different the surrounding scene! A table covered with flowers, bright with fanciful crystal, and porcelain that had belonged to sovereigns, who had given a name to its colour or its form. As for those present, all seemed grace and gentleness, from the radiant daughters of the house to the noiseless attendants that anticipated all his wants, and sometimes seemed to suggest his wishes.

Lothair sat between two of the married daughters. They addressed him with so much sympathy that he was quite enchanted. When they asked their pretty questions and made their sparkling remarks, roses

seemed to drop from their lips, and sometimes diamonds. It was a rather large party, for the Brentham family were so numerous that they themselves made a festival. There were four married daughters, the Duke and two sons-in-law, a clergyman or two, and some ladies and gentlemen who were seldom absent from this circle, and who, by their useful talents and various accomplishments, alleviated the toil or cares of life from which even princes are not exempt.

When the ladies had retired to the Duchess's drawing-room, all the married daughters clustered round their mother.

'Do you know, mamma, we all think him very good-looking,' said the youngest married daughter, the wife of the listless and handsome St. Aldegonde.

'And not at all shy,' said Lady Montairy, 'though reserved.'

'I admire deep blue eyes with dark lashes,' said the Duchess.

Notwithstanding the decision of Lady Montairy, Lothair was scarcely free from embarrassment when he rejoined the ladies; and was so afraid of standing alone, or talking only to men, that he was almost on the point of finding refuge in his dinner companions, had not he instinctively felt that this would have been a social blunder. But the Duchess relieved him: her gracious glance caught his at the right moment, and she rose and met him some way as he advanced. The friends had arrived so late, that Lothair had had only time to make a reverence of ceremony before dinner.

'It is not our first meeting,' said her Grace; 'but that you cannot remember.'

'Indeed I do,' said Lothair, 'and your Grace gave me a golden heart.'

'How can you remember such things,' exclaimed the Duchess, 'which I had myself forgotten!'

'I have rather a good memory,' replied Lothair; 'and it is not wonderful that I should remember this, for it is the only present that ever was made me.'

The evenings at Brentham were short, but they were sweet. It was a musical family, without being fanatical on the subject. There was always music, but it was not permitted that the guests should be deprived of other amusements. But music was the basis of the evening's campaign. The Duke himself sometimes took a second; the four married daughters warbled sweetly; but the great performer was Lady Corisande. When her impassioned tones sounded, there was a hushed silence in every chamber; otherwise, many things were said and done amid accompanying melodies that animated without distracting even a whist-player. The Duke himself rather preferred a game of piquet or écarté with Captain Mildmay, and sometimes retired with a troop to a distant but still visible apartment, where they played with billiard balls games which were not billiards.

The ladies had retired, the Duke had taken his glass of seltzer water, and had disappeared. The gentlemen lingered and looked at each other, as if they were an assembly of poachers gathering for an expedition, and then Lord St. Aldegonde, tall, fair, and languid, said to Lothair, 'Do you smoke?'

'No!'

'I should have thought Bertram would have seduced you by this time. Then let us try. Montairy will give you one of his cigarettes, so mild that his wife never finds him out.'

CHAPTER IV.

Dolce far Niente.

THE breakfast-room at Brentham was very bright. It opened on a garden of its own, which, at this season, was so glowing, and cultured into patterns so fanciful and finished, that it had the resemblance of a vast mosaic. The walls of the chamber were covered with bright drawings and sketches of our modern masters, and frames of interesting miniatures, and the meal was served on half-a-dozen or more round tables, which vied with each other in grace and merriment; brilliant as a cluster of Greek or Italian republics, instead of a great metropolitan table, like a central government absorbing all the genius and resources of the society.

Every scene in this life at Brentham charmed Lothair, who, though not conscious of being of a particularly gloomy temper, often felt that he had, somehow or other, hitherto passed through life rarely with pleasure, and never with joy.

After breakfast the ladies retired to their morning-room, and the gentlemen strolled to the stables, Lord St. Aldegonde lighting a Manilla cheroot of enormous length. As Lothair was very fond of horses, this de-

lighted him. The stables at Brentham were rather too far from the house, but they were magnificent, and the stud worthy of them. It was numerous and choice, and, above all, it was useful. It could supply a readier number of capital riding horses than any stable in England. Brentham was a great riding family. In the summer season the Duke delighted to head a numerous troop, penetrate far into the country, and scamper home to a nine o'clock dinner. All the ladies of the house were fond and fine horsewomen. The mount of one of these riding parties was magical. The dames and damsels vaulted on their barbs, and genets, and thorough-bred hacks, with such airy majesty; they were absolutely overwhelming with their bewildering habits and their bewitching hats.

Everything was so new in this life at Brentham to Lothair, as well as so agreeable, that the first days passed by no means rapidly; for, though it sounds strange, time moves with equal slowness whether we experience many impressions or none. In a new circle every character is a study, and every incident an adventure; and the multiplicity of the images and emotions restrains the hours. But after a few days, though Lothair was not less delighted, for he was more so, he was astonished at the rapidity of time. The life was exactly the same, but equally pleasant; the same charming companions, the same refined festivity, the same fascinating amusements; but to his dismay Lothair recollected that nearly a fortnight had elapsed since his arrival. Lord St. Aldegonde also was on the wing; he was obliged to go to Cowes to see a sick friend, though he considerately left Bertha behind him. The other son-in-law remained, for he

could not tear himself away from his wife. He was so distractedly fond of Lady Montairy that he would only smoke cigarettes. Lothair felt it was time to go, and he broke the circumstance to his friend Bertram.

These two 'old fellows,' as they mutually described each other, could not at all agree as to the course to be pursued. Bertram looked upon Lothair's suggestion as an act of desertion from himself. At their time of life, the claims of friendship are paramount. And where could Lothair go to? And what was there to do? Nowhere, and nothing, whereas, if he would remain a little longer as the Duke expected and also the Duchess, Bertram would go with him anywhere he liked, and do anything he chose. So Lothair remained.

In the evening, seated by Lady Montairy, Lothair observed on her sister's singing, and said, 'I never heard any of our great singers, but I cannot believe there is a finer voice in existence.'

'Corisande's is a fine voice,' said Lady Montairy, 'but I admire her expression more than her tone; for there are certainly many finer voices, and some day you will hear them.'

'But I prefer expression,' said Lothair very decidedly.

'Ah, yes! doubtless,' said Lady Montairy, who was working a purse, 'and that is what we all want, I believe; at least we married daughters, they say. My brother, Granville St. Aldegonde, says we are all too much alike, and that Bertha St. Aldegonde would be perfect if she had no sisters.'

'I do not at all agree with Lord St. Aldegonde,' said Lothair with energy. 'I do not think it is pos-

sible to have too many relatives like you and your sisters.'

Lady Montairy looked up with a smile, but she did not meet a smiling countenance. He seemed what is called an earnest young man, this friend of her brother Bertram.

At this moment the Duke sent swift messengers for all to come, even the Duchess, to partake in a new game just arrived from Russia, some miraculous combination of billiard balls. Some rose directly, some lingering a moment arranging their work, but all were in motion. Corisande was at the piano, and disencumbering herself of some music. Lothair went up to her rather abruptly:

'Your singing,' he said, 'is the finest thing I ever heard. I am so happy that I am not going to leave Brentham to-morrow. There is no place in the world that I think equal to Brentham.'

'And I love it too, and no other place,' she replied; 'and I should be quite happy if I never left it.'

CHAPTER V.

A Sudden Proposal.

LORD MONTAIRY was passionately fond of croquet. He flattered himself that he was the most accomplished male performer existing. He would have thought absolutely the most accomplished, were it not for the unrivalled feats of Lady Montairy. She was the queen of croquet. Her sisters also used the mallet with admirable skill, but not like Victoria. Lord Montairy always looked forward to his summer croquet at Brentham. It was a great croquet family, the Brentham family; even listless Lord St. Aldegonde would sometimes play, with a cigar never out of his mouth. They did not object to his smoking in the air. On the contrary, 'they rather liked it.' Captain Mildmay, too, was a brilliant hand, and had written a treatise on croquet, the best going.

There was a great croquet party one morning at Brentham. Some neighbours had been invited who loved the sport. Mr. Blenkinsop, a grave young gentleman, whose countenance never relaxed while he played, and who was understood to give his mind entirely up to croquet. He was the owner of the largest estate in the county, and it was thought would very

willingly have allied himself with one of the young ladies of the House of Brentham; but these flowers were always plucked so quickly that his relations with the distinguished circle never grew more intimate than croquet. He drove over with some fine horses and several cases and bags containing instruments and weapons for the fray. His sister came with him, who had forty thousand pounds, but, they said, in some mysterious manner dependent on his consent to her marriage; and it was added that Mr. Blenkinsop would not allow his sister to marry because he would miss her so much in his favourite pastime. There were some other morning visitors, and one or two young curates in cassocks.

It seemed to Lothair a game of great deliberation and of more interest than gaiety, though sometimes a cordial cheer, and sometimes a ringing laugh of amiable derision, notified a signal triumph or a disastrous failure. But the scene was brilliant: a marvellous lawn, the Duchess's Turkish tent with its rich hangings, and the players themselves, the prettiest of all the spectacle, with their coquettish hats, and their half-veiled and half-revealed under-raiment, scarlet and silver, or blue and gold, made up a sparkling and modish scene.

Lothair, who had left the players for awhile and was regaining the lawn, met the Duchess.

'Your Grace is not going to leave us, I hope?' he said, rather anxiously.

'For a moment. I have long promised to visit the new dairy; and I think this a good opportunity.'

'Might I be your companion?' said Lothair.

They turned into a winding walk of thick and fragrant shrubs, and, after awhile, they approached

a dell, surrounded with high trees that enveloped it with perpetual shade; in the centre of the dell was apparently a Gothic shrine, fair in design and finished in execution, and this was the Duchess's new dairy. A pretty sight is a first-rate dairy, with its flooring of fanciful tiles, and its cool and shrouded chambers, its stained windows and its marble slabs, and porcelain pans of cream, and plenteous platters of fantastically formed butter.

'Mrs. Woods and her dairymaids look like a Dutch picture,' said the Duchess. 'Were you ever in Holland?'

'I have never been anywhere,' said Lothair.

'You should travel,' said the Duchess.

'I have no wish,' said Lothair.

'The Duke has given me some Corean fowls,' said the Duchess to Mrs. Woods, when they had concluded their visit. 'Do you think you could take care of them for me?'

'Well, Grace, I am sure I will do my best; but then they are very troublesome, and I was not fortunate with my Cochin. I had rather they were sent to the aviary, Grace, if it were all the same.'

'I should like to see the aviary,' said Lothair.

'Well, we will go.'

And this rather extended their walk, and withdrew them more from the amusement of the day.

'I wish you would do me a great favour,' said Lothair, abruptly breaking a rather prolonged silence.

'And what is that?' said the Duchess.

'It is a very great favour,' repeated Lothair.

'If it be in my power to grant it, its magnitude would only be an additional recommendation.'

'Well,' said Lothair, blushing deeply, and speaking with much agitation, 'I would ask your Grace's permission to offer my hand to your daughter.'

The Duchess looked amazed. 'Corisande!' she exclaimed.

'Yes, to Lady Corisande.'

'Corisande,' replied the Duchess, after a pause, 'has absolutely not yet entered the world. Corisande is a child; and you — you, my dear friend — I am sure you will pardon me if I say so — you are not very much older than Corisande.'

'I have no wish to enter the world,' said Lothair, with much decision.

'I am not an enemy to youthful marriages,' said the Duchess. 'I married early myself, and my children married early; and I am very happy, and I hope they are; but some experience of society before we settle is most desirable, and is one of the conditions I cannot but believe of that felicity which we all seek.'

'I hate society,' said Lothair. 'I would never go out of my domestic circle if it were the circle I contemplate.'

'My dear young friend,' said the Duchess, 'you could hardly have seen enough of society to speak with so much decision.'

'I have seen quite enough of it,' said Lothair. 'I went to an evening party last season; I came up from Christchurch on purpose for it, and if ever they catch me at another, they shall inflict any penalty they please.'

'I fear it was a stupid party,' said the Duchess, smiling, and glad to turn, if possible, the conversation into a lighter vein.

'No, it was a very grand party, I believe, and not exactly stupid; it was not that; but I was disgusted with all I saw and all I heard. It seemed to me a mass of affectation, falsehood, and malice.'

'Oh! dear,' said the Duchess, 'how very dreadful! But I did not mean merely going to parties for society; I meant knowledge of the world, and that experience which enables us to form sound opinions on the affairs of life.'

'Oh! as for that,' said Lothair, 'my opinions are already formed on every subject; that is to say, every subject of importance; and, what is more, they will never change.'

'I could not say that of Corisande,' said the Duchess.

'I think we agree on all the great things,' said Lothair, musingly. 'Her Church views may be a little higher than mine, but I do not anticipate any permanent difficulty on that head. Although my uncle made me go to kirk, I always hated it, and always considered myself a churchman. Then, as to churches themselves, she is in favour of building churches, and so am I; and schools, there is no number of schools I would not establish. My opinion is, you cannot have too much education, provided it be founded on a religious basis. I would sooner renounce the whole of my inheritance than consent to secular education.'

'I should be sorry to see any education but a religious education,' remarked the Duchess.

'Well, then,' said Lothair, 'that is our life, or a great part of it. To complete it, there is that to which I really wish to devote my existence, and in which I instinctively feel Lady Corisande would sympathise with me, the extinction of pauperism.'

'That is a vast subject,' said the Duchess.

'It is the terror of Europe, and the disgrace of Britain,' said Lothair; 'and I am resolved to grapple with it. It seems to me that pauperism is not an affair so much of wages as of dwellings. If the working classes were properly lodged, at their present rate of wages, they would be richer. They would be healthier and happier at the same cost. I am so convinced of this, that the moment I am master I shall build 2,000 cottages on my estates. I have the designs all ready.'

'I am much in favour of improved dwellings for the poor,' said the Duchess; 'but then you must take care that your dwellings are cottages, and not villas like my cousin's, the Duke of Luton.'

'I do not think I shall make that mistake,' replied Lothair. 'It constantly engages my thought. I am wearied of hearing of my wealth, and I am conscious it has never brought me any happiness. I have lived a great deal alone, dearest Duchess, and thought much of these things, but I feel now I should be hardly equal to the effort, unless I had a happy home to fall back upon.'

'And you will have a happy home in due time,' said the Duchess; 'and with such good and great thoughts you deserve one. But take the advice of one who loved your mother, and who would extend to you the same affection as to her own children: before you take a step which cannot be recalled, see a little more of the world.'

Lothair shook his head. 'No,' he said, after a pause. 'My idea of perfect society is being married as I propose, and paying visits to Brentham; and when the visits to Brentham ceased, then I should like you and the Duke to pay visits to us.'

'But that would be a fairy tale,' said the Duchess.

So they walked on in silence.

Suddenly and abruptly Lothair turned to the Duchess and said, 'Does your Grace see any objection to my speaking to your daughter?'

'Dear friend, indeed, yes. What you would say would only agitate and disturb Corisande. Her character is not yet formed, and its future is perplexing, at least to me,' murmured the mother. 'She has not the simple nature of her sisters. It is a deeper and more complicated mind, and I watch its development with fond but anxious interest.' Then in a lighter tone she added, 'You do not know very much of us. Try to know more. Everybody under this roof views you with regard, and you are the brother friend of our eldest son. Wherever we are, you will always find a home; but do not touch again upon this subject, at least at present, for it distresses me.' And then she took his arm and pressed it, and by this time they had gained the croquet ground.

CHAPTER VI.

A Prince of the Church.

ONE of the least known squares in London is Hexham Square, though it is one of the oldest. Not that it is very remote from the throng of existence, but it is isolated in a dingy district of silent and decaying streets. Once it was a favoured residence of opulence and power, and its architecture still indicates its former and prouder destiny. But its noble mansions are now divided and broken up into separate dwellings, or have been converted into chambers and offices. Lawyers, and architects, and agents dwell in apartments where the richly-sculptured chimneypieces, the carved and gilded pediments over the doors, and sometimes even the painted ceilings, tell a tale of vanished stateliness and splendour.

A considerable portion of the north side of the square is occupied by one house standing in a courtyard, with iron gates to the thoroughfare. This is Hexham House, and where Lord Hexham lived in the days of the first Georges. It is reduced in size since his time, two considerable wings having been pulled down about sixty years ago, and their materials em-

ployed in building some residences of less pretension. But the body of the dwelling-house remains, and the courtyard, though reduced in size, has been retained.

Hexham House has an old oak entrance hall panelled with delicacy, and which has escaped the rifling arts of speculators in furniture; and out of it rises a staircase of the same material, of a noble character, adorned occasionally with figures; armorial animals holding shields, and sometimes a grotesque form rising from fruits and flowers, all doubtless the work of some famous carver. The staircase leads to a corridor, on which several doors open, and through one of these, at the moment of our history, a man, dressed in a dark cassock and holding a card in his hand, was entering a spacious chamber, meagrely, but not shabbily, furnished. There was a rich cabinet and a fine picture. In the next room, not less spacious, but which had a more inhabited look, a cheerful fire, tables covered with books and papers, and two individuals busily at work with their pens, he gave the card to a gentleman who wore also the cassock, and who stood before the fire with a book in his hand, and apparently dictating to one of the writers.

'Impossible!' said the gentleman, shaking his head; 'I could not even go in, as Monsignore Berwick is with his Eminence.'

'But what shall I do?' said the attendant; 'his Eminence said that when Mr. Giles called he never was to be denied.'

'The Monsignore has been here a long time; you must beg Mr. Giles to wait. Make him comfortable; give him a newspaper; not the *Tablet,* the *Times;* men like Mr. Giles love reading the advertisements.

Or stop, give him this, his Eminence's lecture on geology; it will show him the Church has no fear of science. Ah! there's my bell, Mr. Giles will not have to wait long.' So saying, the gentleman put down his volume and disappeared through an antechamber into a further apartment.

It was a library of moderate dimensions, and yet its well-filled shelves contained all the weapons of learning and controversy which the deepest and the most active of ecclesiastical champions could require. It was unlike modern libraries, for it was one in which folios greatly predominated; and they stood in solemn and sometimes magnificent array, for they bore, many of them, on their ancient though costly bindings the proofs that they had belonged to many a prince and even sovereign of the Church. Over the mantelpiece hung a portrait of his Holiness, Pius IX., and on the table, in the midst of many papers, was an ivory crucifix.

The master of the library had risen from his seat when the chief secretary entered, and was receiving an obeisance. Above the middle height, his stature seemed magnified by the attenuation of his form. It seemed that the soul never had so frail and fragile a tenement. He was dressed in a dark cassock with a red border, and wore scarlet stockings; and over his cassock a purple tippet, and on his breast a small golden cross. His countenance was naturally of an extreme pallor, though at this moment slightly flushed with the animation of a deeply interesting conference. His cheeks were hollow, and his grey eyes seemed sunk into his clear and noble brow, but they flashed with irresistible penetration. Such was Cardinal Grandison.

'All that I can do,' said his Eminence, when his visitor was ushered out, and slightly shrugging his shoulders, 'is to get it postponed until I go to Rome, and even then I must not delay my visit. This crossing the Alps in winter is a trial; but we must never repine, and there is nothing which we must not encounter to prevent incalculable mischief. The publication of the Scotch hierarchy at this moment will destroy the labours of years. And yet they will not see it! I cannot conceive who is urging them, for I am sure they must have some authority from home. You have something for me, Chidiock,' he added, enquiringly, for his keen eye caught the card.

'I regret to trouble your Eminence when you need repose, but the bearer of this card seems to have been importunate and to have appealed to your name and personal orders;' and he gave the Cardinal the card.

'Yes,' said the Cardinal looking at the card with much interest; 'this is a person I must always see.'

And so in due course they ushered into the library a gentleman with a crimson and well-stuffed bag, of a composed yet cheerful aspect, who addressed the Cardinal with respect but without embarrassment, saying, 'I am ashamed to trouble your Eminence with only matters of form, absolutely mere matters of form; but I obey, sir, your own instructions.'

'It is not for me to depreciate form,' replied the Cardinal; 'and in business there are no mere matters of form.'

'Merely the wood accounts,' continued the visitor; 'they must be approved by both the guardians, or the money cannot be received by the bankers. Your

Eminence, you see, has sanctioned the felling, and authorised the sales, and these are the final accounts, which must be signed before we pay in.'

'Give them to me,' said the Cardinal, stretching out both his hands as he received a mass of paper folios. His Eminence resumed his chair, and hastily examined the sheets. 'Ah!' he said, 'no ordinary felling; it reaches over seven counties. By-the-bye, Bracewood Forest; what about the enclosure? I have heard no more of it.' Then, murmuring to himself, 'Grentham Wood; how well I remember Grentham Wood, with his dear father!'

'If we could sign to-day,' said the visitor in a tone of professional cajolery: 'time is important.'

'And it shall not be wasted,' replied the Cardinal. 'But I must look over the accounts. I doubt not all is quite regular, but I wish to make myself a little familiar with the scene of action; perhaps to recall the past,' he added. 'You shall have them to-morrow, Mr. Giles.'

'Your Eminence will have very different accounts to settle in a short time,' said Mr. Giles, smiling. 'We are hard at work; it takes three of our clerks constantly occupied.'

'But you have yet got time.'

'I don't know that,' said Mr. Giles. 'The affairs are very large. And the mines, they give us the greatest trouble. Our Mr. James Roundell was two months in Wales last year about them. It took up the whole of his vacation. And your Eminence must remember that time flies. In less than eight months he will be of age.'

'Very true,' said the Cardinal; 'time indeed flies, and so much to be done! By-the-bye, Mr. Giles,

have you by any chance heard anything lately of my child?'

'I have heard of him a good deal of late, for a client of ours, Lord Montairy, met him at Brentham this summer, and was a long time there with him. After that, I hear, he went deer-stalking with some of his young friends; but he is not very fond of Scotland; had rather too much of it, I suspect; but the truth is, sir, I saw him this very day.'

'Indeed!'

'Some affairs have brought him up to town, and I rather doubt whether he will return to Oxford; at least, so he talks.'

'Ah! I have never seen him since he was an infant, I might say,' said the Cardinal. 'I suppose I shall see him again, if only when I resign my trust; but I know not. And yet few things would be more interesting to me than to meet him!'

Mr. Giles seemed moved, for him almost a little embarrassed; he seemed to blush, and then he cleared his throat. 'It would be too great a liberty,' said Mr. Giles, 'I feel that very much; and yet, if your Eminence would condescend, though I hardly suppose it possible, his lordship is really going to do us the honour of dining with us to-day; only a few friends, and if your Eminence could make the sacrifice, and it were not an act of too great presumption to ask your Eminence to join our party.'

'I never eat and I never drink,' said the Cardinal. 'I am sorry to say I cannot. I like dinner society very much. You see the world, and you hear things which you do not hear otherwise. For a time I presumed to accept invitations, though I sat with an empty plate; but though the world was indulgent

to me, I felt that my habits were an embarrassment to the happier feasters: it was not fair, and so I gave it up. But I tell you what, Mr. Giles: I shall be in your quarter this evening; perhaps you would permit me to drop in and pay my respects to Mrs. Giles: I have wished to do so before.'

CHAPTER VII.

Counsel and Client.

R. GILES was a leading partner in the firm of Roundells, Giles, and Roundell, among the most eminent solicitors of Lincoln's Inn. He, in these days of prolonged maturity, might be described as still a young man. He had inherited from his father a large share in a first-rate business, and no inconsiderable fortune; and he had a wife, celebrated in her circle, but no children. He was opulent and prosperous, with no cares and anxieties of his own, and loved his profession, for which he was peculiarly qualified, being a man of uncommon sagacity, very difficult to deceive, and yet one who sympathised with his clients, who were all personally attached to him, and many of whom were among the distinguished personages of the realm.

During an important professional visit to Ireland, Mr. Giles had made the acquaintance of Miss Apollonia Smylie, the niece of an Irish peer; and though the lady was much admired and courted, had succeeded, after a time, in inducing her to become the partner of his life.

Mrs. Giles, or as she described herself Mrs. Put-

ney Giles, taking advantage of a second and territorial Christian name of her husband, was a showy woman; decidedly handsome, unquestionably accomplished, and gifted with energy and enthusiasm which far exceeded even her physical advantages. Her principal mission was to destroy the Papacy and to secure Italian unity. Her lesser impulses were to become acquainted with the aristocracy, and to be herself surrounded by celebrities. Having a fine house in Tyburnia, almost as showy as herself, and a husband who was never so happy as when gratifying her wishes, she did not find it difficult in a considerable degree to pursue and even accomplish her objects. The Putney Giles gave a great many dinners, and Mrs. Putney received her world frequently, if not periodically. As they entertained with profusion, her well-lighted saloons were considerably attended. These assemblies were never dull; the materials not being ordinary, often startling, sometimes even brilliant, occasionally rather heterogeneous. For though being a violent Protestant and of extreme conservative opinions, her anti-papal antipathies and her Italian predilections frequently involved her with acquaintances not so distinguished as she deemed herself for devotion to the cause of order and orthodoxy. It was rumoured that the brooding brow of Mazzini had been observed in her rooms, and there was no sort of question that she had thrown herself in ecstatic idolatry at the feet of the hero of Caprera.

On the morning of the day on which he intended to visit Cardinal Grandison, Mr. Giles, in his chambers at Lincoln's Inn, was suddenly apprised by a clerk that an interview with him was sought by a client no less distinguished than Lothair.

Although Mr. Giles sat opposite two rows of tin boxes, each of which was numbered, and duly inscribed with the name of Lothair and that of the particular estate to which it referred, Mr. Giles, though he had occasional communications with his client, was personally unacquainted with him. He viewed therefore with no ordinary curiosity the young man who was ushered into his room; a shapely youth about the middle height, of simple but distinguished mien, with a countenance naturally pale, though somewhat bronzed by a life of air and exercise, and a profusion of dark auburn hair.

And for what could Lothair be calling on Mr. Giles?

It seems that one of Lothair's intimate companions had got into a scrape, and under these circumstances had what is styled 'made a friend' of Lothair; that is to say, confided to him his trouble, and asked his advice, with a view, when given, of its being followed by an offer of assistance.

Lothair, though inexperienced and very ingenuous, was not devoid of a certain instinctive perception of men and things, which rendered it difficult for him to be an easy prey. His natural disposition, and his comparatively solitary education, had made him a keen observer, and he was one who meditated over his observations. But he was naturally generous and sensible of kindness; and this was a favourite companion, next to Bertram his most intimate.

Lothair was quite happy in the opportunity of soothing a perturbed spirit whose society had been to him a source of so much gratification.

It was not until Lothair had promised to extricate his friend from his overwhelming difficulties, that,

upon reflection and examination, he found the act on his part was not so simple and so easy as he had assumed it to be. His guardians had apportioned to him an allowance in every sense adequate to his position; and there was no doubt, had he wished to exceed it for any legitimate purpose, not the slightest difficulty on their part would have been experienced.

Such a conjuncture had never occurred. Lothair was profuse, but he was not prodigal. He gratified all his fancies, but they were not ignoble ones; and he was not only sentimentally, but systematically, charitable. He had a great number of fine horses, and he had just paid for an expensive yacht. In a word, he spent a great deal of money, and until he called at his bankers to learn what sums were at his disposition he was not aware that he had overdrawn his account.

This was rather awkward. Lothair wanted a considerable sum, and he wanted it at once. Irrespective of the consequent delay, he shrunk from any communication with his guardians. From his uncle he had become, almost insensibly, estranged, and with his other guardian he had never had the slightest communication. Under these circumstances he recalled the name of the solicitor of the trustees, between whom and himself there had been occasional correspondence; and being of a somewhat impetuous disposition, he rode off at once from his hotel to Lincoln's Inn.

Mr. Giles listened to the narrative with unbroken interest and unswerving patience, with his eyes fixed on his client, and occasionally giving a sympathetic nod.

'And so,' concluded Lothair, 'I thought I would come to you.'

'We are honoured,' said Mr. Giles. 'And certainly it is quite absurd that your lordship should want money, and for a worthy purpose, and not be able to command it. Why! the balance in the name of the trustees never was so great as at this moment; and this very day, or to-morrow at furthest, I shall pay no less than eight-and-thirty thousand pounds timber money to the account.'

'Well, I don't want a fifth of that,' said Lothair.

'Your lordship has an objection to apply to the trustees?' enquired Mr. Giles.

'That is the point of the whole of my statement,' said Lothair, somewhat impatiently.

'And yet it is the right and regular thing,' said Mr. Giles.

'It may be right and it may be regular, but it is out of the question.'

'Then we will say no more about it. What I want to prevent,' said Mr. Giles, musingly, 'is anything absurd happening. There is no doubt if your lordship went into the street and said you wanted ten thousand pounds, or a hundred thousand, fifty people would supply you immediately; but you would have to pay for it. Some enormous usury! That would be bad; but the absurdity of the thing would be greater than the mischief. Roundells, Giles, and Roundell could not help you in that manner. That is not our business. We are glad to find money for our clients at a legal rate of interest, and the most moderate rate feasible. But then there must be security, and the best security. But here we must not conceal it from ourselves, my lord, we have no security whatever. At this moment your lordship has no property. An insurance office might do

it with a policy. They might consider that they had a moral security; but still it would be absurd. There is something absurd in your lordship having to raise money. Don't you think I could see these people,' said Mr. Giles, 'and talk to them, and gain a little time? We only want a little time.'

'No,' said Lothair, in a peremptory tone. 'I said I would do it, and it must be done, and at once. Sooner than there should be delay, I would rather go into the street, as you suggest, and ask the first man I met to lend me the money. My word has been given, and I do not care what I pay to fulfil my word.'

'We must not think of such things,' said Mr. Giles, shaking his head. 'All I want your lordship to understand is the exact position. In this case we have no security. Roundells, Giles, and Roundell cannot move without security. It would be against our articles of partnership. But Mr. Giles, as a private individual, may do what he likes. I will let your lordship have the money, and I will take no security whatever, not even a note of hand. All that I will ask for is that your lordship should write me a letter, saying you have urgent need for a sum of money (mentioning amount) for an honourable purpose, in which your feelings are deeply interested; and that will do. If anything happens to your lordship before this time next year, why, I think the trustees could hardly refuse repaying the money; and if they did, why, then,' added Mr. Giles, 'I suppose it will be all the same a hundred years hence.'

'You have conferred on me the greatest obligation,' said Lothair, with much earnestness. 'Language cannot express what I feel. I am not too much used to

kindness, and I only hope that I may live to show my sense of yours.'

'It is really no great affair, my lord,' said Mr. Giles. 'I did not wish to make difficulties, but it was my duty to put the matter clearly before you. What I propose to do is really nothing. I could do no less; I should have felt quite absurd if your lordship had gone into the money market.'

'I only hope,' repeated Lothair, rising and offering Mr. Giles his hand, 'that life may give me some occasion to prove my gratitude.'

'Well, my lord,' replied Mr. Giles, 'if your lordship wish to repay me for any little interest I have shown in your affairs, you can do that, over and over again, and at once.'

'How so?'

'By a very great favour, by which Mrs. Giles and myself would be deeply gratified. We have a few friends who honour us by dining with us to-day in Hyde Park Gardens. If your lordship would add the great distinction of your presence——'

'I should only be too much honoured,' exclaimed Lothair; 'I suppose about eight;' and he left the room; and Mr. Giles telegraphed instantly the impending event to Apollonia.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Strange Face.

T WAS a great day for Apollonia; not only to have Lothair on her right hand at dinner, but the prospect of receiving a Cardinal in the evening. But she was equal to it; though so engrossed, indeed, in the immediate gratification of her hopes and wishes, that she could scarcely dwell sufficiently on the coming scene of triumph and social excitement.

The repast was sumptuous; Lothair thought the dinner would never end, there were so many dishes, and apparently all of the highest pretension. But if his simple tastes had permitted him to take an interest in these details, which they did not, he would have been assisted by a splendid menu of gold and white typography, that was by the side of each guest. The table seemed literally to groan under vases and gigantic flagons, and, in its midst, rose a mountain of silver, on which apparently all the cardinal virtues, several of the pagan deities, and Britannia herself, illustrated with many lights a glowing inscription which described the fervent feelings of a grateful client.

There were many guests: the Dowager of Farringford, a lady of quality, Apollonia's great lady, who exercised under this roof much social tyranny; in short, was rather fine; but who, on this occasion, was somewhat cowed by the undreamt-of presence of Lothair. She had not yet met him, and probably never would have met him, had she not had the good fortune of dining at his lawyer's. However, Lady Farringford was placed a long way from Lothair, having been taken down to dinner by Mr. Giles, and so, by the end of the first course, Lady Farringford had nearly resumed her customary despotic vein, and was beginning to indulge in several kind observations, cheapening her host and hostess and indirectly exalting herself; upon which Mr. Giles took an early easy opportunity of apprising Lady Farringford that she had nearly met Cardinal Grandison at dinner, and that his Eminence would certainly pay his respects to Mrs. Putney Giles in the evening. As Lady Farringford was at present a high ritualist, and had even been talked of as 'going to Rome,' this intelligence was stunning, and it was observed that her ladyship was unusually subdued during the whole of the second course.

On the right of Lothair sat the wife of a Vice-Chancellor, a quiet and pleasing lady, to whom Lothair, with natural good breeding, paid snatches of happy attention, when he could for a moment with propriety withdraw himself from the blaze of Apollonia's coruscating conversation. Then there was a rather fierce-looking Red Ribbon, medalled as well as be-starred, and the Red Ribbon's wife, with a blushing daughter, in spite of her parentage not yet accustomed to stand fire. A partner and his unus-

ually numerous family had the pleasure also of seeing Lothair for the first time, and there were no less than four M.P.'s, one of whom was even in office.

Apollonia was stating to Lothair, with brilliant perspicuity, the reasons which quite induced her to believe that the Gulf Stream had changed its course, and the political and social consequences that might accrue.

'The religious sentiment of the Southern races must be wonderfully affected by a more rigorous climate,' said Apollonia. 'I cannot doubt,' she continued, 'that a series of severe winters at Rome might put an end to Romanism.'

'But is there any fear that a reciprocal influence might be exercised on the Northern nations?' enquired Lothair. 'Would there be any apprehension of our Protestantism becoming proportionately relaxed?'

'Of course not,' said Apollonia. 'Truth cannot be affected by climate. Truth is truth alike in Palestine and Scandinavia.'

'I wonder what the Cardinal would think of this,' said Lothair, 'who, you tell me, is coming to you this evening.'

'Yes, I am most interested to see him, though he is the most puissant of our foes. Of course he would take refuge in sophistry; and science, you know, they deny.'

'Cardinal Grandison is giving some lectures on science,' said the Vice-Chancellor's lady, quietly.

'It is remorse,' said Apollonia. 'Their clever men can never forget that unfortunate affair of Galileo, and think they can divert the indignation of the nineteenth century by mock zeal about red sandstone or the origin of species.'

'And are you afraid of the Gulf Stream?' enquired Lothair of his calmer neighbour.

'I think we want more evidence of a change. The Vice-Chancellor and I went down to a place we have near town on Saturday, where there is a very nice piece of water; indeed, some people call it a lake; it was quite frozen, and my boys wanted to skate, but that I would not permit.'

'You believe in the Gulf Stream to that extent,' said Lothair; 'no skating.'

The Cardinal came early; the ladies had not long left the dining-room. They were agitated when his name was announced; even Apollonia's heart beat; but then that might be accounted for by the inopportune recollection of an occasional correspondence with Caprera.

Nothing could exceed the simple suavity with which the Cardinal appeared, approached, and greeted them. He thanked Apollonia for her permission to pay his respects to her, which he had long wished to do; and then they were all presented, and he said exactly the right thing to everyone. He must have heard of them all before, or read their characters in their countenances. In a few minutes they were all listening to his Eminence with enchanted ease, as, sitting on the sofa by his hostess, he described to them the ambassadors who had just arrived from Japan, and with whom he had relations of interesting affairs. The Japanese Government had exhibited enlightened kindness to some of his poor people who had barely escaped martyrdom. Much might be expected from the Mikado, evidently a man of singular penetration and elevated views; and his Eminence looked as if the mission to Yokohama would speedily

end in an episcopal see; but he knew where he was, and studiously avoided all controversial matter.

After all, the Mikado himself was not more remarkable than this Prince of the Church in a Tyburnian drawing-room, habited in his red cassock and cape, and waving, as he spoke, with careless grace his red biretta.

The ladies thought the gentlemen rejoined them too soon; but Mr. Giles, when he was apprised of the arrival of the Cardinal, thought it right to precipitate the symposium. With great tact, when the Cardinal rose to greet him, Mr. Giles withdrew his Eminence from those surrounding, and, after a brief interchange of whispered words, quitted him, and then brought forward and presented Lothair to the Cardinal, and left them.

'This is not the first time that we should have met,' said the Cardinal; 'but my happiness is so great at this moment that, though I deplore, I will not dwell on, the past.'

'I am, nevertheless, grateful to you, sir, for many services, and have more than once contemplated taking the liberty of personally assuring your Eminence of my gratitude.'

'I think we might sit down,' said the Cardinal, looking around; and then he led Lothair into an open but interior saloon, where none were yet present, and where they seated themselves on a sofa, and were soon engaged in apparently interesting converse.

In the meantime the world gradually filled the principal saloon of Apollonia, and when it approached overflowing, occasionally some persons passed the line, and entered the room in which the Cardinal and his ward were seated, and then, as if conscious of

violating some sacred place, drew back. Others, on the contrary, with coarser curiosity, were induced to invade the chamber from the mere fact that the Cardinal was to be seen there.

'My geographical instinct,' said the Cardinal to Lothair, 'assures me that I can regain the staircase through these rooms, without rejoining the busy world; so I shall bid you good night, and even presume to give you my blessing;' and his Eminence glided away.

When Lothair returned to the saloon it was so crowded that he was not observed; exactly what he liked; and he stood against the wall watching all that passed, not without amusement. A lively social parasite, who had dined there, and had thanked his stars at dinner that fortune had decreed he should meet Lothair, had been cruising for his prize all the time that Lothair had been conversing with the Cardinal, and was soon at his side.

'A strange scene this!' said the parasite.

'Is it unusual?' enquired Lothair.

'Such a medley! How they can be got together, I marvel: priests and philosophers, legitimists and carbonari! Wonderful woman, Mrs. Putney Giles!'

'She is very entertaining,' said Lothair, 'and seems to me clever.'

'Remarkably so,' said the parasite, who had been on the point of satirising his hostess, but, observing the quarter of the wind, with rapidity went in for praise. 'An extraordinary woman. Your lordship had a long talk with the Cardinal.'

'I had the honour of some conversation with Cardinal Grandison,' said Lothair, drawing up.

'I wonder what the Cardinal would have said if he had met Mazzini here?'

'Mazzini! Is he here?'

'Not now; but I have seen him here,' said the parasite, 'and our host such a Tory! That makes the thing so amusing;' and then the parasite went on making small personal observations on the surrounding scene, and every now and then telling little tales of great people with whom, it appeared, he was intimate: all concerted fire to gain the very great social fortress he was now besieging. The parasite was so full of himself, and so anxious to display himself to advantage, that with all his practice it was some time before he perceived he did not make all the way he could wish with Lothair, who was courteous, but somewhat monosyllabic and absent.

'Your lordship is struck by that face?' said the parasite.

Was Lothair struck by that face? And what was it?

He had exchanged glances with that face during the last ten minutes, and the mutual expression was not one of sympathy, but curiosity, blended on the part of the face, with an expression, if not of disdain, of extreme reserve.

It was the face of a matron, apparently of not many summers, for her shapely figure was still slender, though her mien was stately. But it was the countenance that had commanded the attention of Lothair: pale, but perfectly Attic in outline, with the short upper lip and the round chin, and a profusion of dark chestnut hair bound by a Grecian fillet, and on her brow a star.

'Yes, I am struck by that face. Who is it?'

'If your lordship could only get a five-franc-piece of the last French Republic, 1850, you would know.

I dare say the moneychangers could get you one. All the artists of Paris, painters, and sculptors, and medallists, were competing to produce a face worthy of representing "La République française;" nobody was satisfied, when Oudine caught a girl of not seventeen, and, with a literal reproduction of nature, gained the prize with unanimity.'

'Ah!'

'And though years have passed, the countenance has not changed; perhaps improved.'

'It is a countenance that will bear, perhaps even would require, maturity,' said Lothair; 'but she is no longer "La République française;" what is she now?'

'She is called Theodora, though married, I believe, to an Englishman, a friend of Garibaldi. Her birth unknown; some say an Italian, some a Pole; all sorts of stories. But she speaks every language, is ultra-cosmopolitan, and has invented a new religion.'

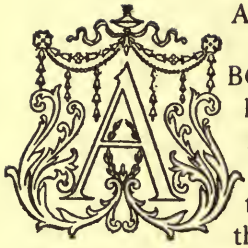
'A new religion!'

'Would your lordship care to be introduced to her? I know her enough for that. Shall we go up to her?'

'I have made so many new acquaintances to-day,' said Lothair, as it were starting from a reverie, 'and indeed heard so many new things, that I think I had better say good night;' and he graciously retired.

CHAPTER IX.

A Lively Dinner.



BOUT the same time that Lothair had repaired to the residence of Mr. Giles, Monsignore Berwick, whose audience of the Cardinal in the morning had preceded that of the legal adviser of the trustees, made his way towards one of the noblest mansions in St. James's Square, where resided Lord St. Jerome.

It was a mild winter evening; a little fog still hanging about, but vanquished by the cheerful lamps, and the voice of the muffin bell was just heard at intervals; a genial sound that calls up visions of trim and happy hearths. If we could only so contrive our lives as to go into the country for the first note of the nightingale, and return to town for the first note of the muffin bell, existence, it is humbly presumed, might be more enjoyable.

Monsignore Berwick was a young man, but looking younger from a countenance almost of childhood; fair, with light blue eyes, and flaxen hair and delicate features. He was the last person you would have fixed upon as a born Roman; but nature, in one of the freaks of race, had resolved that his old Scottish

blood should be re-asserted, though his ancestors had sedulously blended it, for many generations, with that of the princely houses of the eternal city. The Monsignore was the greatest statesman of Rome, formed and favoured by Antonelli, and probably his successor.

The mansion of Lord St. Jerome was a real family mansion, built by his ancestors a century and a half ago, when they believed that from its central position, its happy contiguity to the Court, the senate, and the seats of Government, they at last in St. James's Square had discovered a site which could defy the vicissitudes of fashion, and not share the fate of their river palaces, which they had been obliged in turn to relinquish. And in a considerable degree they were right in their anticipation, for although they have somewhat unwisely permitted the clubs to invade too successfully their territory, St. James's Square may be looked upon as our Faubourg St. Germain, and a great patrician residing there dwells in the heart of that free and noble life of which he ought to be a part.

A marble hall and a marble staircase, lofty chambers with silk or tapestried hangings, gilded cornices, and painted ceilings, gave a glimpse of almost Venetian splendour, rare in our metropolitan houses of this age; but the first dwellers in St. James's Square had tender and inspiring recollections of the Adrian bride, had frolicked in St. Mark's, and glided in adventurous gondolas. The Monsignore was ushered into a chamber bright with lights and a blazing fire, and welcomed with extreme cordiality by his hostess, who was then alone. Lady St. Jerome was still the young wife of a nobleman not old. She was the daughter of a Protestant house, but, during a residence at

Rome after her marriage, she had reverted to the ancient faith, which she professed with the enthusiastic convictions of a convert. Her whole life was dedicated to the triumph of the Catholic cause; and being a woman of considerable intelligence and of an ardent mind, she had become a recognised power in the great confederacy which has so much influenced the human race, and which has yet to play perhaps a mighty part in the fortunes of the world.

'I was in great hopes that the Cardinal would have met you at dinner,' said Lady St. Jerome, 'but he wrote only this afternoon to say unexpected business would prevent him, but he would be here in the evening, though late.'

'It must be something sudden, for I was with his Eminence this morning, and he then contemplated our meeting here.'

'Nothing from abroad?'

'I should think not, or it would be known to me. There is nothing new from abroad this afternoon: my time has been spent in writing, not receiving, despatches.'

'And all well, I hope?'

'This Scotch business plagues us. So far as Scotland is concerned it is quite ripe; but the Cardinal counsels delay on account of this country, and he has such a consummate knowledge of England that——'

At this moment Lord St. Jerome entered the room: a grave but gracious personage, polished but looking silent, though he immediately turned the conversation to the weather. The Monsignore began denouncing English fogs; but Lord St. Jerome maintained that, on the whole, there were not more fogs in England than in any other country; 'and as for the French,' he

added, 'I like their audacity, for when they revolutionised the calendar, they called one of their months Brumaire.'

Then came in one of his lordship's chaplains, who saluted the Monsignore with reverence, and immediately afterwards a beautiful young lady, his niece, Clare Arundel.

The family were living in a convenient suite of small rooms on the ground-floor, called the winter rooms, so dinner was announced by the doors of an adjoining chamber being thrown open, and there they saw, in the midst of a chamber hung with green silk and adorned with some fine cabinet-pictures, a small round table bright and glowing.

It was a lively dinner. Lord St. Jerome loved conversation, though he never conversed. 'There must be an audience,' he would say, 'and I am the audience.' The partner of his life, whom he never ceased admiring, had originally fascinated him by her conversational talents; and even if nature had not impelled her, Lady St. Jerome was too wise a woman to relinquish the spell. The Monsignore could always, when necessary, sparkle with anecdote or blaze with repartee; and all the chaplains, who abounded in this house, were men of bright abilities, not merely men of reading but of the world, learned in the world's ways, and trained to govern mankind by the versatility of their sympathies. It was a dinner where there could not be two conversations going on, and where even the silent take their share in the talk by their sympathy.

And among the silent, as silent even as Lord St. Jerome, was Miss Arundel; and yet the large violet eyes, darker even than her dark brown hair, and gleaming

with intelligence, and her rich face mantling with emotion, proved she was not insensible to the witty passages and the bright and interesting narratives that were sparkling and flowing about her.

The gentlemen left the dining-room with the ladies in the continental manner. Lady St. Jerome, who was leaning on the arm of the Monsignore, guided him into a saloon further than the one they had re-entered, and then seating herself said, 'You were telling me about Scotland, that you yourself thought it ripe.'

'Unquestionably. The original plan was to have established our hierarchy when the Kirk split up; but that would have been a mistake; it was not then ripe. There would have been a fanatical reaction. There is always a tendency that way in Scotland: as it is, at this moment, the Establishment and the Free Kirk are mutually sighing for some compromise which may bring them together again; and if the proprietors would give up their petty patronage, some flatter themselves it might be arranged. But we are thoroughly well-informed, and have provided for all this. We sent two of our best men into Scotland some time ago, and they have invented a new Church, called the United Presbyterians. John Knox himself was never more violent, or more mischievous. The United Presbyterians will do the business: they will render Scotland simply impossible to live in; and then, when the crisis arrives, the distracted and despairing millions will find refuge in the bosom of their only mother. That is why, at home, we wanted no delay in the publication of the bull and the establishment of the hierarchy.'

'But the Cardinal says no?'

'And must be followed. For these islands he has no equal. He wishes great reserve at present. Affairs here are progressing, gradually but surely. But it is Ireland where matters are critical, or will be soon.'

'Ireland! I thought there was a sort of understanding there, at least for the present.'

The Monsignore shook his head, 'What do you think of an American invasion of Ireland?'

'An American invasion!'

'Even so; nothing more probable, and nothing more to be deprecated by us. Now that the civil war in America is over, the Irish soldiery are resolved to employ their experience and their weapons in their own land; but they have no thought for the interests of the Holy See, or the welfare of our holy religion. Their secret organisation is tampering with the people and tampering with the priests. The difficulty of Ireland is that the priests and the people will consider things from a purely Irish point of view. To gain some local object, they will encourage the principles of the most lawless liberalism, which naturally land them in Fenianism and atheism. And the danger is not foreseen, because the Irish political object of the moment is alone looked to.'

'But surely they can be guided?'

'We want a statesman in Ireland. We have never been able to find one; we want a man like the Cardinal. But the Irish will have a native for their chief. We caught Churchill young, and educated him in the Propaganda; but he has disappointed us. At first all seemed well; he was reserved and austere; and we heard with satisfaction that he was unpopular. But now that critical times are arriving, his

peasant blood cannot resist the contagion. He proclaims the absolute equality of all religions, and of the power of the state to confiscate ecclesiastical property, and alienate it for ever. For the chance of subverting the Anglican Establishment, he is favouring a policy which will subvert religion itself. In his eagerness he cannot see that the Anglicans have only a lease of our property, a lease which is rapidly expiring.'

'This is sad.'

'It is perilous, and difficult to deal with. But it must be dealt with. The problem is to suppress Fenianism, and not to strengthen the Protestant confederacy.'

'And you left Rome for this? We understood you were coming for something else,' said Lady St. Jerome in a significant tone.

'Yes, yes, I have been there, and I have seen him.'

'And have you succeeded?'

'No; and no one will; at least at present.'

'Is all lost then? Is the Malta scheme again on the carpet?'

'Our Holy Church is built upon a rock,' said the Monsignore, 'but not upon the rock of Malta. Nothing is lost; Antonelli is calm and sanguine, though, rest assured, there is no doubt about what I tell you. France has washed her hands of us.'

'Where, then, are we to look for aid,' exclaimed Lady St. Jerome, 'against the assassins and atheists? Austria, the alternative ally, is no longer near you; and if she were (that I should ever live to say it), even Austria is our foe.'

'Poor Austria!' said the Monsignore with an unctuous sneer. 'Two things made her a nation;

she was German and she was Catholic, and now she is neither.'

'But you alarm me, my dear lord, with your terrible news. We once thought that Spain would be our protector, but we hear bad news from Spain.'

'Yes,' said the Monsignore, 'I think it highly probable that, before a few years have elapsed, every government in Europe will be atheistical except France. Vanity will always keep France the eldest son of the Church, even if she wear a *bonnet rouge*. But if the Holy Father keep Rome, these strange changes will only make the occupier of the chair of St. Peter more powerful. His subjects will be in every clime and every country, and then they will be only his subjects. We shall get rid of the difficulty of the divided allegiance, Lady St. Jerome, which plagued our poor forefathers so much.'

'If we keep Rome,' said Lady St. Jerome.

'And we shall. Let Christendom give us her prayers for the next few years, and Pio Nono will become the most powerful monarch in Europe, and perhaps the only one.'

'I hear a sound,' exclaimed Lady St. Jerome. 'Yes! the Cardinal has come. Let us greet him.'

But as they were approaching the saloon the Cardinal met them, and waved them back. 'We will return,' he said, 'to our friends immediately, but I want to say one word to you both.'

He made them sit down. 'I am a little restless,' he said, and stood before the fire. 'Something interesting has happened; nothing to do with public affairs (do not pitch your expectations too high), but still of importance, and certainly of great interest, at least to me. I have seen my child, my ward.'

'Indeed an event!' said Lady St. Jerome, evidently much interested.

'And what is he like?' enquired the Monsignore.

'All that one could wish. Extremely good-looking, highly bred, and most ingenuous; a considerable intelligence and not untrained; but the most absolutely unaffected person I ever encountered.'

'Ah! if he had been trained by your Eminence,' sighed Lady St. Jerome. 'Is it too late?'

''Tis an immense position,' murmured Berwick.

'What good might he not do?' said Lady St. Jerome; 'and if he be so ingenuous, it seems impossible that he can resist the truth.'

'Your ladyship is a sort of cousin of his,' said the Cardinal musingly.

'Yes; but very remote. I dare say he would not acknowledge the tie. But we are kin; we have the same blood in our veins.'

'You should make his acquaintance,' said the Cardinal.

'I more than desire it. I hear he has been terribly neglected, brought up among the most dreadful people, entirely infidels and fanatics.'

'He has been nearly two years at Oxford,' said the Cardinal. 'That may have mitigated the evil.'

'Ah! but you, my Lord Cardinal, you must interfere. Now that you at last know him, you must undertake the great task; you must save him.'

'We must all pray, as I pray every morn and every night,' said the Cardinal, 'for the conversion of England.'

'Or the conquest,' murmured Berwick.

CHAPTER X.

'À BAS LES PRÊTRES!'

S THE Cardinal was regaining his carriage on leaving Mrs. Giles's party, there was, about the entrance of the house, the usual gathering under such circumstances; some zealous linkboys, marvellously familiar with London life, and some midnight loungers, who thus take their humble share of the social excitement, and their happy chance of becoming acquainted with some of the notables of the wondrous world of which they form the base. This little gathering, ranged at the instant into stricter order by the police to facilitate the passage of his Eminence, prevented the progress of a passenger, who exclaimed in an audible, but not noisy, voice, as if he were ejaculating to himself, *'À bas les prêtres!'*

This exclamation, unintelligible to the populace, was noticed only by the only person who understood it. The Cardinal, astonished at the unusual sound (for, hitherto, he had always found the outer world of London civil, or at least indifferent), threw his penetrating glance at the passenger, and caught clearly the visage on which the lamp-light fully shone. It was a square, sinewy face, closely shaven, with the

exception of a small but thick moustache, brown as the well-cropped hair, and blending with the hazel eye; a calm, but determined countenance; clearly not that of an Englishman, for he wore ear-rings.

The carriage drove off, and the passenger, somewhat forcing his way through the clustering group, continued his course until he reached the cab-stand near the Marble Arch, when he engaged a vehicle and ordered to be driven to Leicester Square. That quarter of the town exhibits an animated scene towards the witching hour; many lights and much population, illuminated coffee-houses, the stir of a large theatre, bands of music in the open air, and other sounds, most of them gay, and some festive. The stranger, whose compact figure was shrouded by a long fur cape, had not the appearance of being influenced by the temptation of amusement. As he stopped in the square and looked around him, the expression of his countenance was moody, perhaps even anxious. He seemed to be making observations on the locality, and, after a few minutes, crossed the open space and turned up into a small street which opened into the square. In this street was a coffee-house of some pretension, connected indeed with an hotel, which had been formed out of two houses, and therefore possessed no inconsiderable accommodation.

The coffee-room was capacious, and adorned in a manner which intimated it was not kept by an Englishman, or much used by Englishmen. The walls were painted in frescoed arabesques. There were many guests, principally seated at small tables of marble, and on benches and chairs covered with a coarse crimson velvet. Some were sipping coffee, some were drinking wine, others were smoking

or playing dominoes, or doing both; while many were engaged in reading the foreign journals which abounded.

An ever-vigilant waiter was at the side of the stranger the instant he entered, and wished to know his pleasure. The stranger was examining with his keen eye every individual in the room, while this question was asked and repeated.

'What would I wish?' said the stranger, having concluded his inspection, and as it were summoning back his recollection. 'I would wish to see, and at once, one Mr. Perroni, who, I believe, lives here.'

'Why, 'tis the master!' exclaimed the waiter.

'Well, then, go and tell the master that I want him.'

'But the master is much engaged,' said the waiter; 'particularly.'

'I dare say; but you will go and tell him that I particularly want to see him.'

The waiter, though prepared to be impertinent to any one else, felt that one was speaking to him who must be obeyed, and with a subdued but hesitating manner said, 'There is a meeting to-night upstairs, where the master is secretary, and it is difficult to see him; but if I could see him, what name am I to give?'

'You will go to him instantly,' said the stranger, 'and you will tell him that he is wanted by Captain Bruges.'

The waiter was not long absent, and returning with an obsequious bow, he invited the stranger to follow him to a private room, where he was alone only for a few seconds, for the door opened and he was joined by Perroni.

'Ah! my General,' exclaimed the master of the coffee-house, and he kissed the stranger's hand. 'You received my telegram?'

'I am here. Now what is your business?'

'There is business, and great business; if you will do it, business for you.'

'Well, I am a soldier, and soldiering is my trade, and I do not much care what I do in that way, provided it is not against the good cause. But I must tell you at once, friend Perroni, I am not a man who will take a leap in the dark. I must form my own staff, and I must have my commissariat secure.'

'My General, you will be master of your own terms. The Standing Committee of the Holy Alliance of Peoples are sitting upstairs at this moment. They were unanimous in sending for you. See them; judge for yourself; and, rest assured, you will be satisfied.'

'I do not much like having to do with committees,' said the General. 'However, let it be as you like: I will see them.'

'I had better just announce your arrival,' said Perroni. 'And will you not take something, my General, after your travel? You must be wearied.'

'A glass of sugar and water. You know I am not easily tired. And, I agree with you, it is better to come to business at once: so prepare them.'

CHAPTER XI.

The Holy Alliance of Peoples.

HE Standing Committee of the Holy Alliance of Peoples all rose, although they were extreme Republicans, when the General entered. Such is the magical influence of a man of action over men of the pen and the tongue. Had it been, instead of a successful military leader, an orator that had inspired Europe, or a journalist who had established the rights of the human race, the Standing Committee would have only seen one of their own kidney, who having been favoured with happier opportunities than themselves, had reaped a harvest which, equally favoured, they might have garnered.

'General,' said Felix Drolin, the President, who was looked upon by the brotherhood as a statesman, for he had been, in his time, a member of a Provisional Government, 'this seat is for you;' and he pointed to one on his right hand. 'You are ever welcome; and I hope you bring good tidings, and good fortune.'

'I am glad to be among my friends, and I may say,' looking around, 'my comrades. I hope I may bring you better fortune than my tidings.'

'But now they have left Rome,' said the President, 'every day we expect good news.'

'Ay, ay! he has left Rome, but he has not left Rome with the door open. I hope it is not on such gossip you have sent for me. You have something on hand. What is it?'

'You shall hear it from the fountain-head,' said the President, 'fresh from New York;' and he pointed to an individual seated in the centre of the table.

'Ah! Colonel Finucane,' said the General, 'I have not forgotten James River. You did that well. What is the trick now?'

Whereupon a tall, lean man, with a decided brogue, but speaking through his nose, rose from his seat and informed the General that the Irish people were organised and ready to rise; that they had sent their deputies to New York; all they wanted were arms and officers; that the American brethren had agreed to supply them with both, and amply; and that considerable subscriptions were raising for other purposes. What they now required was a commander-in-chief equal to the occasion, and in whom all would have confidence; and therefore they had telegraphed for the General.

'I doubt not our friends over the water would send us plenty of rifles,' said the General, 'if we could only manage to land them; and I think I know men now in the States from whom I could form a good staff; but how about the people of Ireland? What evidence have we that they will rise, if we land?'

'The best,' said the President. 'We have a Head-Centre here, Citizen Desmond, who will give you the most recent and the most authentic intelligence on that head.'

'The whole country is organised,' said the Head-Centre; 'we could put 300,000 men in the field at any time in a fortnight. The movement is not sectarian; it pervades all classes and all creeds. All that we want are officers and arms.'

'Hem!' said the General. 'And as to your other supplies? Any scheme of commissariat?'

'There will be no lack of means,' replied the Head-Centre. 'There is no country where so much money is hoarded as in Ireland. But, depend upon it, so far as the commissariat is concerned, the movement will be self-supporting.'

'Well, we shall see,' said the General; 'I am sorry it is an Irish affair, though, to be sure, what else could it be? I am not fond of Irish affairs: whatever may be said, and however plausible things may look, in an Irish business there is always a priest at the bottom of it. I hate priests. By-the-bye, I was stopped on my way here by a Cardinal getting into his carriage. I thought I had burnt all those vehicles when I was at Rome with Garibaldi in '48. A Cardinal in his carriage! I had no idea you permitted that sort of cattle in London.'

'London is a roost for every bird,' said Felix Drolin.

'Very few of the priests favour this movement,' said Desmond.

'Then you have a great power against you,' said the General, 'in addition to England.'

'They are not exactly against; the bulk of them are too national for that; but Rome does not sanction: you understand?'

'I understand enough,' said the General, 'to see that we must not act with precipitation. An Irish business is a thing to be turned over several times.'

'But yet,' said a Pole, 'what hope for humanity except from the rising of an oppressed nationality? We have offered ourselves on the altar, and in vain! Greece is too small, and Roumania, though both of them are ready to do anything; but they would be the mere tools of Russia. Ireland alone remains, and she is at our feet.'

'The peoples will never succeed till they have a fleet,' said a German. 'Then you could land as many rifles as you like, or anything else. To have a fleet we rose against Denmark in my country, but we have been betrayed. Nevertheless, Germany will yet be united, and she can only be united as a Republic. Then she will be the mistress of the seas.'

'That is the mission of Italy,' said Perroni. 'Italy, with the traditions of Genoa, Venice, Pisa; Italy is plainly indicated as the future mistress of the seas.'

'I beg your pardon,' said the German; 'the future mistress of the seas is the land of the Viking. It is the forests of the Baltic that will build the fleet of the future. You have no timber in Italy.'

'Timber is no longer wanted,' said Perroni. 'Nor do I know of what will be formed the fleets of the future. But the sovereignty of the seas depends upon seamen, and the nautical genius of the Italians——'

'Comrades,' said the General, 'we have discussed to-night a great subject. For my part I have travelled rather briskly, as you wished it. I should like to sleep on this affair.'

''Tis most reasonable,' said the President. 'Our refreshment at council is very spare,' he continued, and he pointed to a vase of water and some glasses ranged round it in the middle of the table; 'but we always drink one toast, General, before we separate.

It is to one whom you love, and whom you have served well. Fill glasses, brethren, and now "To Mary Anne."'

If they had been inspired by the grape nothing could be more animated and even excited than all their countenances suddenly became. The cheer might have been heard in the coffee-room, as they expressed, in the phrases of many languages, the never-failing and never-flagging enthusiasm invoked by the toast of their mistress.

CHAPTER XII.

Gentle Persuasion.

'ID you read that paragraph, mamma?' enquired Lady Corisande of the Duchess, in a tone of some seriousness.

'I did.'

'And what did you think of it?'

'It filled me with so much amazement that I have hardly begun to think.'

'And Bertram never gave a hint of such things!'

'Let us believe they are quite untrue.'

'I hope Bertram is in no danger,' said his sister.

'Heaven forbid!' exclaimed the mother, with unaffected alarm.

'I know not how it is,' said Lady Corisande, 'but I frequently feel that some great woe is hanging over our country.'

'You must dismiss such thoughts, my child; they are fanciful.'

'But it will come, and when least expected; frequently in church, but also in the sunshine; and when I am riding too, when once everything seemed gay. But now I often think of strife, and struggle, and war;

civil war: the stir of our cavalcade seems like the tramp of cavalry.'

'You indulge your imagination too much, dear Corisande. When you return to London, and enter the world, these anxious thoughts will fly.'

'Is it imagination? I should rather have doubted my being of an imaginative nature. It seems to me that I am rather literal. But I cannot help hearing things, and reading things, and observing things, and they fill me with disquietude. All seems doubt and change, when it would appear that we require both faith and firmness.'

'The Duke is not alarmed about affairs,' said his wife.

'And if all did their duty like papa, there might be less or no cause,' said Corisande, 'to be alarmed. But when I hear of young nobles, the natural leaders of the land, going over to the Roman Catholic Church, I confess I lose heart and patience. It seems so unpatriotic, so effeminate.'

'It may not be true,' said the Duchess.

'It may not be true of him, but it is true of others,' said Lady Corisande. 'And why should he escape? He is very young, rather friendless, and surrounded by wily persons. I am disappointed about Bertram too. He ought to have prevented this, if it be true. Bertram seemed to me to have such excellent principles, and so completely to feel that he was born to maintain the great country which his ancestors had created, that I indulged in dreams. I suppose you are right, mamma; I suppose I am imaginative without knowing it; but I have always thought and hoped that when the troubles came the country might, perhaps, rally round Bertram.'

'I wish to see Bertram in Parliament,' said the Duchess. 'That will be the best thing for him. The Duke has some plans.'

This conversation had been occasioned by a paragraph in the *Morning Post*, circulating a rumour that a young noble, obviously Lothair, on the impending completion of his minority, was about to enter the Roman Church. The Duchess and her daughter were sitting in a chamber of their northern castle, and speculating on their return to London, which was to take place after the Easter which had just arrived. It was an important social season for Corisande, for she was to be formally introduced into the great world, and to be presented at Court.

In the meanwhile, was there any truth in the report about Lothair?

After their meeting at their lawyer's, a certain intimacy had occurred between the Cardinal and his ward. They met again immediately and frequently, and their mutual feelings were cordial. The manners of his Eminence were refined and affectionate; his conversational powers were distinguished; there was not a subject on which his mind did not teem with interesting suggestions; his easy knowledge seemed always ready and always full; and whether it were art, or letters, or manners, or even political affairs, Lothair seemed to listen to one of the wisest, most enlightened, and most agreeable of men. There was only one subject on which his Eminence seemed scrupulous never to touch, and that was religion; or so indirectly, that it was only when alone that Lothair frequently found himself musing over the happy influence on the arts, and morals, and happiness of mankind, of the Church.

In due time, not too soon, but when he was attuned to the initiation, the Cardinal presented Lothair to Lady St. Jerome. The impassioned eloquence of that lady germinated the seed which the Cardinal had seemed so carelessly to scatter. She was a woman to inspire crusaders. Not that she ever condescended to vindicate her own particular faith, or spoke as if she were conscious that Lothair did not possess it. Assuming that religion was true, for otherwise man would be in a more degraded position than the beasts of the field, which are not aware of their own wretchedness, then religion should be the principal occupation of man, to which all other pursuits should be subservient. The doom of eternity, and the fortunes of life, cannot be placed in competition. Our days should be pure, and holy, and heroic, full of noble thoughts and solemn sacrifice. Providence, in its wisdom, had decreed that the world should be divided between the faithful and atheists; the latter even seemed to predominate. There was no doubt that, if they prevailed, all that elevated man would become extinct. It was a great trial; but happy was the man who was privileged even to endure the awful test. It might develop the highest qualities and the most sublime conduct. If he were equal to the occasion, and could control and even subdue these sons of Korah, he would rank with Michael the Archangel.

This was the text on which frequent discourses were delivered to Lothair, and to which he listened at first with eager, and soon with enraptured attention. The priestess was worthy of the shrine. Few persons were ever gifted with more natural eloquence; a command of language, choice without being pedan-

tic; beautiful hands that fluttered with irresistible grace; flashing eyes and a voice of melody.

Lothair began to examine himself, and to ascertain whether he possessed the necessary qualities, and was capable of sublime conduct. His natural modesty and his strong religious feeling struggled together. He feared he was not an archangel, and yet he longed to struggle with the powers of darkness.

One day he ventured to express to Miss Arundel a somewhat hopeful view of the future, but Miss Arundel shook her head.

'I do not agree with my aunt, at least as regards this country,' said Miss Arundel; 'I think our sins are too great. We left His Church, and God is now leaving us.'

Lothair looked grave, but was silent.

Weeks had passed since his introduction to the family of Lord St. Jerome, and it was remarkable how large a portion of his subsequent time had passed under that roof. At first there were few persons in town, and really of these Lothair knew none; and then the house in St. James's Square was not only an interesting, but it was an agreeable house. All Lady St. Jerome's family connections were persons of much fashion, so there was more variety and entertainment than sometimes are to be found under a Roman Catholic roof. Lady St. Jerome was at home every evening before Easter. Few dames can venture successfully on so decided a step; but her saloons were always attended, and by 'nice people.' Occasionally the Cardinal stepped in, and, to a certain degree, the saloon was the rendezvous of the Catholic party; but it was also generally social and distinguished. Many bright dames and damsels, and many influential men, were

there, who little deemed that deep and daring thoughts were there masked by many a gracious countenance. The social atmosphere infinitely pleased Lothair. The mixture of solemn duty and graceful diversion, high purposes, and charming manners, seemed to realise some youthful dreams of elegant existence. All, too, was enhanced by the historic character of the roof and by the recollection that their common ancestors, as Clare Arundel more than once intimated to him, had created England. Having had so many pleasant dinners in St. James's Square, and spent there so many evening hours, it was not wonderful that Lothair had accepted an invitation from Lord St. Jerome to pass Easter at his country seat.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Castle of Vauxe.

AUXE, the seat of the St. Jeromes, was the finest specimen of the old English residence extant. It was the perfection of the style which had gradually arisen after the wars of the Roses had alike destroyed all the castles and the purpose of those stern erections. People said Vauxe looked like a college: the truth is, colleges looked like Vauxe, for when those fair and civil buildings rose, the wise and liberal spirits who endowed them, intended that they should resemble as much as possible the residence of a great noble.

There were two quadrangles at Vauxe of grey stone; the outer one of larger dimensions and much covered with ivy; the inner one not so extensive but more ornate, with a lofty tower, a hall, and a chapel. The house was full of galleries, and they were full of portraits. Indeed there was scarcely a chamber in this vast edifice of which the walls were not breathing with English history in this interesting form. Sometimes more ideal art asserted a triumphant claim: transcendental Holy Families, seraphic saints, and gorgeous scenes by Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese.

The furniture of the house seemed never to have been changed. It was very old, somewhat scanty, but very rich: tapestry and velvet hangings, marvellous cabinets, and crystal girandoles. Here and there a group of ancient plate; ewers and flagons and tall saltcellars a foot high and richly chiselled; sometimes a state bed shadowed with a huge pomp of stiff brocade borne by silver poles.

Vauxe stood in a large park studded with stately trees; here and there an avenue of Spanish chestnuts or a grove of oaks; sometimes a gorsy dell and sometimes a great spread of antlered fern, taller than the tallest man.

It was only twenty miles from town, and Lord St. Jerome drove Lothair down; the last ten miles through a pretty land, which, at the right season, would have been bright with orchards, oak woods, and hop gardens. Lord St. Jerome loved horses and was an eminent whip. He had driven four-in-hand when a boy, and he went on driving four-in-hand; not because it was the fashion, but because he loved it. Towards the close of Lent, Lady St. Jerome and Clare Arundel had been at a convent in retreat, but they always passed Holy Week at home, and they were to welcome Lord St. Jerome again at Vauxe.

The day was bright, the mode of movement exhilarating, all the anticipated incidents delightful, and Lothair felt the happiness of health and youth.

'There is Vauxe,' said Lord St. Jerome, in a tone of proud humility, as a turn in the road first displayed the stately pile.

'How beautiful!' said Lothair; 'ah! our ancestors understood the country.'

'I used to think when I was a boy,' said Lord St. Jerome, 'that I lived in the prettiest village in the world, but these railroads have so changed everything, that Vauxe seems to me now only a second town house.'

The ladies were in a garden, where they were consulting with the gardener and Father Coleman about the shape of some new beds, for the critical hour of filling them was approaching. The gardener, like all head-gardeners, was opiniated. Living always at Vauxe, he had come to believe that the gardens belonged to him, and that the family were only occasional visitors; and he treated them accordingly. The lively and impetuous Lady St. Jerome had a thousand bright fancies, but her morose attendant rarely indulged them. She used to deplore his tyranny with piteous playfulness. 'I suppose,' she would say, 'it is useless to resist, for I observe 'tis the same everywhere. Lady Roehampton says she never has her way with her gardens. It is of no use speaking to Lord St. Jerome, for though he is afraid of nothing else, I am sure he is afraid of Hawkins.'

The only way that Lady St. Jerome could manage Hawkins was through Father Coleman. Father Coleman, who knew everything, knew a great deal about gardens; from the days of Le Notre to those of the fine gentlemen who now travel about, and when disengaged deign to give us advice.

Father Coleman had only just entered middle-age, was imperturbable and mild in his manner. He passed his life very much at Vauxe, and imparted a great deal of knowledge to Mr. Hawkins, without apparently being conscious of so doing. At the bottom of his mind, Mr. Hawkins felt assured that

he had gained several distinguished prizes mainly through the hints and guidance of Father Coleman; and thus, though on the surface a little surly, he was ruled by Father Coleman, under the combined influence of self-interest and superior knowledge.

'You find us in a garden without flowers,' said Lady St. Jerome; 'but the sun, I think, always loves these golden yews.'

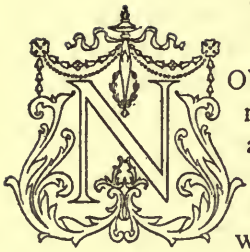
'These are for you, dear uncle,' said Clare Arundel, as she gave him a rich cluster of violets. 'Just now the woods are more fragrant than the gardens, and these are the produce of our morning walk. I could have brought you some primroses, but I do not like to mix violets with anything.'

'They say primroses make a capital salad,' said Lord St. Jerome.

'Barbarian!' exclaimed Lady St. Jerome. 'I see you want luncheon; it must be ready;' and she took Lothair's arm. 'I will show you a portrait of one of your ancestors,' she said; 'he married an Arundel.'

CHAPTER XIV.

The Tenebræ.



OW, you know,' said Lady St. Jerome to Lothair in a hushed voice, as they sat together in the evening, 'you are to be quite free here; to do exactly what you like, and we shall follow our ways. If you like to have a clergyman of your own Church visit you while you are with us, pray say so without the slightest scruple. We have an excellent gentleman in this parish; he often dines here; and I am sure he would be most happy to attend you. I know that Holy Week is not wholly disregarded by some of the Anglicans.'

'It is the anniversary of the greatest event of time,' said Lothair; 'and I should be sorry if any of my Church did not entirely regard it, though they may show that regard in a way different from your own.'

'Yes, yes,' murmured Lady St. Jerome; 'there should be no difference between our Churches, if things were only properly understood. I would accept all who really bow to the name of Christ; they will come to the Church at last; they must. It is the

atheists alone, I fear, who are now carrying everything before them, and against whom there is no rampart, except the rock of St. Peter.'

Miss Arundel crossed the room, whispered something to her aunt, and touched her forehead with her lips, and then left the apartment.

'We must soon separate, I fear,' said Lady St. Jerome; 'we have an office to-night of great moment; the Tenebræ commence to-night. You have, I think, nothing like it, but you have services throughout this week.'

'I am sorry to say I have not attended them,' said Lothair. 'I did at Oxford; but I don't know how it is, in London there seems no religion. And yet, as you sometimes say, religion is the great business of life; I sometimes begin to think the only business.'

'Yes, yes,' said Lady St. Jerome, with much interest, 'if you believe that you are safe. I wish you had a clergyman near you while you are here. See Mr. Claughton if you like; I would; and if you do not, there is Father Coleman. I cannot convey to you how satisfactory conversation is with him on religious matters. He is the holiest of men, and yet he is a man of the world: he will not invite you into any controversies. He will speak with you only on points on which we agree. You know there are many points on which we agree?'

'Happily,' said Lothair. 'And now about the office to-night: tell me about these Tenebræ. Is there anything in the Tenebræ that should prevent my being present?'

'No reason whatever; not a dogma which you do not believe; not a ceremony of which you cannot

approve. There are psalms, at the end of each of which a light on the altar is extinguished. There is the Song of Moses, the Canticle of Zachary, the Miserere, which is the 51st Psalm you read and chant regularly in your church, the Lord's Prayer in silence; and then all is darkness and distress: what the Church was when our Lord suffered, what the whole world is now except His Church.'

'If you will permit me,' said Lothair, 'I will accompany you to the Tenebræ.'

Although the chapel at Vauxe was, of course, a private chapel, it was open to the surrounding public, who eagerly availed themselves of a permission alike politic and gracious.

Nor was that remarkable. Manifold art had combined to create this exquisite temple, and to guide all its ministrations. But to-night it was not the radiant altar and the splendour of stately priests, the processions and the incense, the divine choir and the celestial harmonies resounding and lingering in arched roofs, that attracted many a neighbour. The altar was desolate, the choir was dumb; and while the services proceeded in hushed tones of subdued sorrow, and sometimes even of suppressed anguish, gradually, with each psalm and canticle, a light of the altar was extinguished, till at length the Miserere was muttered, and all became darkness. A sound as of a distant and rising wind was heard, and a crash, as it were the fall of trees in a storm. The earth is covered with darkness, and the veil of the temple is rent. But just at this moment of extreme woe, when all human voices are silent, and when it is forbidden even to breathe 'Amen;' when everything is symbolical of the confusion and despair of the Church at

the loss of her expiring Lord, a priest brings forth a concealed light of silvery flame from a corner of the altar. This is the light of the world, and announces the resurrection, and then all arise and depart in silence.

As Lothair rose, Miss Arundel passed him with streaming eyes.

'There is nothing in this holy office,' said Father Coleman to Lothair, 'to which every real Christian might not give his assent.'

'Nothing,' said Lothair, with great decision.

CHAPTER XV.

Monsignore Catesby.

HERE were Tenebræ on the following days, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday; and Lothair was present on both occasions.

'There is also a great office on Friday,' said Father Coleman to Lothair, 'which perhaps you would not like to attend, the mass of the pro-sanctified. We bring back the Blessed Sacrament to the desolate altar, and unveil the Cross. It is one of our highest ceremonies, the adoration of the Cross, which the Protestants persist in calling idolatry, though I presume they will give us leave to know the meaning of our own words and actions, and hope they will believe us when we tell them that our genuflexions and kissing of the Cross are no more than exterior expressions of that love which we bear in our hearts to Jesus crucified; and that the words adoration and adore, as applied to the Cross, only signify that respect and veneration due to things immediately relating to God and His service.'

'I see no idolatry in it,' said Lothair musingly.

'No impartial person could,' rejoined Father Coleman, 'but unfortunately all these prejudices were im-

bibed when the world was not so well-informed as at present. A good deal of mischief has been done, too, by the Protestant versions of the Holy Scriptures; made in a hurry, and by men imperfectly acquainted with the Eastern tongues, and quite ignorant of Eastern manners. All the accumulated research and investigation of modern times have only illustrated and justified the offices of the Church.'

'That is very interesting,' said Lothair.

'Now, this question of idolatry,' said Father Coleman, 'that is a fertile subject of misconception. The house of Israel was raised up to destroy idolatry, because idolatry then meant dark images of Moloch opening their arms by machinery, and flinging the beauteous firstborn of the land into their huge forms, which were furnaces of fire; or Ashtaroth, throned in moonlit groves, and surrounded by orgies of ineffable demoralisation. It required the declared will of God to redeem man from such fatal iniquity, which would have sapped the human race. But to confound such deeds with the commemoration of God's saints, who are only pictured because their lives are perpetual incentives to purity and holiness, and to declare that the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of God should be to human feeling only as a sister of charity or a gleaner in the fields, is to abuse reason and to outrage the heart.'

'We live in dark times,' said Lothair, with an air of distress.

'Not darker than before the deluge,' exclaimed Father Coleman; 'not darker than before the Nativity; not darker even than when the saints became martyrs. There is a Pharos in the world, and its light will never be extinguished, however black the clouds and

wild the waves. Man is on his trial now, not the Church; but in the service of the Church his highest energies may be developed, and his noblest qualities proved.'

Lothair seemed plunged in thought, and Father Coleman glided away as Lady St. Jerome entered the gallery, shawled and bonneted, accompanied by another priest, Monsignore Catesby.

Catesby was a youthful member of an ancient English house, which for many generations had without a murmur, rather in a spirit of triumph, made every worldly sacrifice for the Church and Court of Rome. For that cause they had forfeited their lives, broad estates, and all the honours of a lofty station in their own land. Reginald Catesby with considerable abilities, trained with consummate skill, inherited their determined will, and the traditionary beauty of their form and countenance. His manners were winning, and he was as well informed in the ways of the world as he was in the works of the great casuists.

'My lord has ordered the char-a-banc, and is going to drive us all to Chart, where we will lunch,' said Lady St. Jerome; ''tis a curious place, and was planted only seventy years ago by my lord's grandfather, entirely with spruce firs, but with so much care and skill, giving each plant and tree ample distance, that they have risen to the noblest proportions, with all their green branches far-spreading on the ground like huge fans.'

It was only a drive of three or four miles entirely in the park. This was a district that had been added to the ancient enclosure; a striking scene. It was a forest of firs, but quite unlike such as might be met

with in the north of Europe or of America. Every tree was perfect, huge and complete, and full of massy grace. Nothing else was permitted to grow there except juniper, of which there were abounding and wondrous groups, green and spiral; the whole contrasting with the tall brown fern of which there were quantities about cut for the deer.

The turf was dry and mossy, and the air pleasant. It was a balmy day. They sat down by the great trees, the servants opened the luncheon baskets, which were a present from Balmoral. Lady St. Jerome was seldom seen to greater advantage than distributing her viands under such circumstances. Never was such gay and graceful hospitality. Lothair was quite fascinated as she playfully thrust a paper of lobster-sandwiches into his hand, and enjoined Monsignore Catesby to fill his tumbler with Chablis.

'I wish Father Coleman were here,' said Lothair to Miss Arundel.

'Why?' said Miss Arundel.

'Because we were in the midst of a very interesting conversation on idolatry and on worship in groves, when Lady St. Jerome summoned us to our drive. This seems a grove where one might worship.'

'Father Coleman ought to be at Rome,' said Miss Arundel. 'He was to have passed Holy Week there. I know not why he changed his plans.'

'Are you angry with him for it?'

'No, not angry, but surprised; surprised that anyone might be at Rome, and yet be absent from it.'

'You like Rome?'

'I have never been there. It is the wish of my life.'

'May I say to you what you said to me just now; why?'

'Naturally, because I would wish to witness the ceremonies of the Church in their most perfect form.'

'But they are fulfilled in this country, I have heard, with much splendour and precision.'

Miss Arundel shook her head.

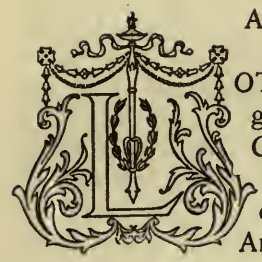
'Oh! no,' she said; 'in this country we are only just emerging from the catacombs. If the ceremonies of the Church were adequately fulfilled in England, we should hear very little of English infidelity.'

'That is saying a great deal,' observed Lothair, enquiringly.

'Had I that command of wealth of which we hear so much in the present day, and with which the possessors seem to know so little what to do, I would purchase some of those squalid streets in Westminster, which are the shame of the metropolis, and clear a great space and build a real cathedral, where the worship of heaven should be perpetually conducted in the full spirit of the ordinances of the Church. I believe, were this done, even this country might be saved.'

CHAPTER XVI.

A Fair Devotee.



OTHAIR began to meditate on two great ideas: the reconciliation of Christendom and the influence of architecture on religion. If the differences between the Roman and Anglican Churches, and between the Papacy and Protestantism, generally arose, as Father Coleman assured him and seemed to prove, in mere misconception, reconciliation, though difficult, did not seem impossible, and appeared to be one of the most efficient modes of defeating the atheists. It was a result which of course mainly depended on the authority of reason; but the power of the imagination might also be enlisted in the good cause through the influence of the fine arts, of which the great mission is to excite, and at the same time elevate, the feelings of the human family. Lothair found himself frequently in a reverie over Miss Arundel's ideal fane; and feeling that he had the power of buying up a district in forlorn Westminster, and raising there a temple to the living God, which might influence the future welfare of millions, and even effect the salvation of his country, he began to ask himself whether he could incur

the responsibility of shrinking from the fulfilment of this great duty.

Lothair could not have a better adviser on the subject of the influence of architecture on religion than Monsignore Catesby. Monsignore Catesby had been a pupil of Pugin; his knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture was only equalled by his exquisite taste. To hear him expound the mysteries of symbolical art, and expatiate on the hidden revelations of its beauteous forms, reached even to ecstasy. Lothair hung upon his accents like a neophyte. Conferences with Father Coleman on those points of faith on which they did not differ, followed up by desultory remarks on those points of faith on which they ought not to differ; critical discussions with Monsignore Catesby on cathedrals, their forms, their purposes, and the instances in several countries in which those forms were most perfect and those purposes best secured, occupied a good deal of time; and yet these engaging pursuits were secondary in real emotion to his frequent conversations with Miss Arundel, in whose society every day he took a strange and deeper interest.

She did not extend to him that ready sympathy which was supplied by the two priests. On the contrary, when he was apt to indulge in those speculations which they always encouraged, and rewarded by adroit applause, she was often silent, throwing on him only the scrutiny of those violet eyes, whose glance was rather fascinating than apt to captivate. And yet he was irresistibly drawn to her, and once recalling the portrait in the gallery, he ventured to murmur that they were kinsfolk.

'Oh! I have no kin, no country,' said Miss Arun-

del. 'These are not times for kin and country. I have given up all these things for my Master!'

'But are our times so trying as that?' enquired Lothair.

'They are times for new crusades,' said Miss Arundel, with energy, 'though it may be of a different character from the old. If I were a man I would draw my sword for Christ. There are as great deeds to be done as the siege of Ascalon, or even as the freeing of the Holy Sepulchre.'

In the midst of a profound discussion with Father Coleman on Mariolatry, Lothair, wrapped in reverie, suddenly introduced the subject of Miss Arundel. 'I wonder what will be her lot,' he exclaimed.

'It seems to me to be settled,' said Father Coleman. 'She will be the bride of the Church.'

'Indeed!' and he started, and even changed colour.

'She deems it her vocation,' said Father Coleman.

'And yet, with such gifts, to be immured in a convent,' said Lothair.

'That would not necessarily follow,' replied Father Coleman. 'Miss Arundel may occupy a position in which she may exercise much influence for the great cause which absorbs her being.'

'There is a divine energy about her,' said Lothair, almost speaking to himself. 'It could not have been given for little ends.'

'If Miss Arundel could meet with a spirit as exalted and as energetic as her own,' said Father Coleman, 'her fate might be different. She has no thoughts which are not great, and no purposes which are not sublime. But for the companion of her life she would require no less than a Godfrey de Bouillon.'

Lothair began to find the time pass very rapidly

at Vauxe. Easter week had nearly vanished; Vauxe had been gay during the last few days. Every day some visitors came down from London; sometimes they returned in the evening; sometimes they passed the night at Vauxe and returned to town in the morning with large bouquets. Lothair felt it was time for him to depart, and he broke his intention to Lady St. Jerome; but Lady St. Jerome would not hear of it. So he muttered something about business.

'Exactly,' she said; 'everybody has business, and I dare say you have a great deal. But Vauxe is precisely the place for persons who have business. You go up to town by an early train, and then you return in time for dinner, and bring us all the news from the clubs.'

Lothair was beginning to say something, but Lady St. Jerome, who, when necessary, had the rare art of not listening without offending the speaker, told him that they did not intend themselves to return to town for a week or so, and that she knew Lord St. Jerome would be greatly annoyed if Lothair did not remain.

Lothair remained; and he went up to town one or two mornings to transact business; that is to say, to see a celebrated architect, and to order plans for a cathedral, in which all the purposes of those sublime and exquisite structures were to be realised. The drawings would take a considerable time to prepare, and these must be deeply considered. So Lothair became quite domiciliated at Vauxe: he went up to town in the morning and returned, as it were, to his home; everybody delighted to welcome him, and yet he seemed not expected. His rooms were called after his name; and the household treated him as one of the family.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Flattering Suggestion.

A FEW days before Lothair's visit was to terminate, the Cardinal and Monsignore Berwick arrived at Vauxe. His Eminence was received with much ceremony; the marshalled household, ranged in lines, fell on their knees at his approach, and Lady St. Jerome, Miss Arundel, and some other ladies scarcely less choice and fair, with the lowest obeisance, touched with their honoured lips his princely hand.

The Monsignore had made another visit to Paris on his intended return to Rome, but in consequence of some secret intelligence which he had acquired in the French capital, had thought fit to return to England to consult with the Cardinal. There seemed to be no doubt that the Revolutionary party in Italy, assured by the withdrawal of the French troops from Rome, were again stirring. There seemed also little doubt that London was the centre of preparation, though the project and the projectors were involved in much mystery. 'They want money,' said the Monsignore; 'that we know, and that is now our best chance. The Aspromonte expedition drained

their private resources; and as for further aid, that is out of the question; the *Galantuomo* is bankrupt. But the atheists are desperate, and we must prepare for events.'

On the morning after their arrival, the Cardinal invited Lothair to a stroll in the park. 'There is the feeling of spring this morning,' said his Eminence, 'though scarcely yet its vision.' It was truly a day of balm, and sweetness, and quickening life; a delicate mist hung about the huge trees and the masses of more distant woods, and seemed to clothe them with that fulness of foliage which was not yet theirs. The Cardinal discoursed much on forest trees, and happily. He recommended Lothair to read Evelyn's 'Sylva.' Mr. Evelyn had a most accomplished mind; indeed, a character in every respect that approached perfection. He was also a most religious man.

'I wonder,' said Lothair, 'how any man who is religious can think of anything but religion.'

'True,' said the Cardinal, and looking at him earnestly, 'most true. But all things that are good and beautiful make us more religious. They tend to the development of the religious principle in us, which is our divine nature. And, my dear young friend,' and here his Eminence put his arm easily and affectionately into that of Lothair's, 'it is a most happy thing for you that you live so much with a really religious family. It is a great boon for a young man, and a rare one.'

'I feel it so,' said Lothair, his face kindling.

'Ah!' said the Cardinal, 'when we remember that this country once consisted only of such families!' And then, with a sigh, and as if speaking to himself, 'and they made it so great and so beautiful!'

'It is still great and beautiful,' said Lothair, but rather in a tone of enquiry than decision.

'But the cause of its greatness and its beauty no longer exists. It became great and beautiful because it believed in God.'

'But faith is not extinct?' said Lothair.

'It exists in the Church,' replied the Cardinal with decision. 'All without that pale is practical atheism.'

'It seems to me that a sense of duty is natural to man,' said Lothair, 'and that there can be no satisfaction in life without attempting to fulfil it.'

'Noble words, my dear young friend; noble and true. And the highest duty of man, especially in this age, is to vindicate the principles of religion, without which the world must soon become a scene of universal desolation.'

'I wonder if England will ever again be a religious country,' said Lothair musingly.

'I pray for that daily,' said the Cardinal; and he invited his companion to seat himself on the trunk of an oak that had been lying there since the autumn fall. A slight hectic flame played over the pale and attenuated countenance of the Cardinal; he seemed for a moment in deep thought; and then in a voice distinct yet somewhat hushed, and at first rather faltering, he said, 'I know not a grander or a nobler career for a young man of talents and position in this age, than to be the champion and asserter of Divine truth. It is not probable that there could be another conqueror in our time. The world is wearied of statesmen, whom democracy has degraded into politicians, and of orators who have become what they call debaters. I do not believe there could be another Dante, even another Milton. The world is devoted

to physical science, because it believes these discoveries will increase its capacity of luxury and self-indulgence. But the pursuit of science leads only to the insoluble. When we arrive at that barren term, the Divine voice summons man, as it summoned Samuel; all the poetry and passion and sentiment of human nature are taking refuge in religion; and he whose deeds and words most nobly represent Divine thoughts, will be the man of this century.'

'But who could be equal to such a task,' murmured Lothair.

'Yourself,' exclaimed the Cardinal, and he threw his glittering eye upon his companion. 'Anyone with the necessary gifts, who has implicit faith in the Divine purpose.'

'But the Church is perplexed; it is ambiguous, contradictory.'

'No, no,' said the Cardinal; 'not the Church of Christ; it is never perplexed, never ambiguous, never contradictory. Why should it be? How could it be? The Divine persons are ever with it, strengthening and guiding it with perpetual miracles. Perplexed churches are churches made by Act of Parliament, not by God.'

Lothair seemed to start, and looked at his guardian with a scrutinising glance. And then he said, but not without hesitation, 'I experience at times great despondency.'

'Naturally,' replied the Cardinal. 'Every man must be despondent who is not a Christian.'

'But I am a Christian,' said Lothair.

'A Christian estranged,' said the Cardinal; 'a Christian without the consolations of Christianity.'

'There is something in that' said Lothair. 'I re-

quire the consolations of Christianity, and yet I feel I have them not. Why is this?'

'Because what you call your religion is a thing apart from your life, and it ought to be your life. Religion should be the rule of life, not a casual incident of it. There is not a duty of existence, not a joy or sorrow which the services of the Church do not assert, or with which they do not sympathise. Tell me, now; you have, I was glad to hear, attended the services of the Church of late, since you have been under this admirable roof. Have you not then found some consolation?'

'Yes; without doubt I have been often solaced.' And Lothair sighed.

'What the soul is to man, the Church is to the world,' said the Cardinal. 'It is the link between us and the Divine nature. It came from heaven complete; it has never changed, and it can never alter. Its ceremonies are types of celestial truths; its services are suited to all the moods of man; they strengthen him in his wisdom and his purity, and control and save him in the hour of passion and temptation. Taken as a whole, with all its ministrations, its orders, its offices, and the divine splendour of its ritual, it secures us on earth some adumbration of that ineffable glory which awaits the faithful in heaven, where the blessed Mother of God and ten thousand saints perpetually guard us with Divine intercession.'

'I was not taught these things in my boyhood,' said Lothair.

'And you might reproach me and reasonably, as your guardian, for my neglect,' said the Cardinal. 'But my power was very limited, and when my duties commenced, you must remember that I was myself

estranged from the Church, I was myself a Parliamentary Christian, till despondency and study and ceaseless thought and prayer, and the Divine will, brought me to light and rest. But I at least saved you from a Presbyterian University; I at least secured Oxford for you; and I can assure you of my many struggles that was not the least.'

'It gave the turn to my mind,' said Lothair, 'and I am grateful to you for it. What it will all end in, God only knows.'

'It will end in His glory and in yours,' said the Cardinal. 'I have spoken perhaps too much and too freely, but you greatly interest me, not merely because you are my charge and the son of my beloved friend, but because I perceive in you great qualities; qualities so great,' continued the Cardinal with earnestness, 'that, properly guided, they may considerably affect the history of this country, and perhaps even have a wider range.'

Lothair shook his head.

'Well, well,' continued the Cardinal in a lighter tone, 'we will pursue our ramble. At any rate, I am not wrong in this, that you have no objection to join in my daily prayer for the conversion of this kingdom to —— religious truth,' his Eminence added after a pause.

'Yes; religious truth,' said Lothair, 'we must all pray for that.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Cathedral of St. Clare.

LOTHAIR returned to town agitated and excited. He felt that he was on the eve of some great event in his existence, but its precise character was not defined. One conclusion, however, was indubitable: life must be religion. When we consider what is at stake, and that our eternal welfare depends on our due preparation for the future, it was folly to spare a single hour from the consideration of the best means to secure our readiness. Such a subject does not admit of half measures or of halting opinions. It seemed to Lothair that nothing could interest him in life that was not symbolical of Divine truths and an adumbration of the celestial hereafter.

Could truth have descended from heaven ever to be distorted, to be corrupted, misapprehended, misunderstood? Impossible! Such a belief would confound and contradict all the attributes of the All-wise and the All-mighty. There must be truth on earth now as fresh and complete as it was at Bethlehem. And how could it be preserved but by the influence of the Paraclete acting on an ordained class? On

this head his tutor at Oxford had fortified him; by a conviction of the Apostolical succession of the English bishops, which no Act of Parliament could alter or affect. But Lothair was haunted by a feeling that the relations of his Communion with the Blessed Virgin were not satisfactory. They could not content either his heart or his intellect. Was it becoming that a Christian should live as regards the hallowed Mother of his God in a condition of harsh estrangement? What mediatorial influence more awfully appropriate than the consecrated agent of the mighty mystery? Nor could he, even in his early days, accept without a scruple the frigid system that would class the holy actors in the divine drama of the Redemption as mere units in the categories of vanished generations. Human beings who had been in personal relation with the Godhead must be different from other human beings. There must be some transcendent quality in their lives and careers, in their very organisation, which marks them out from all secular heroes. What was Alexander the Great, or even Caius Julius, compared with that apostle whom Jesus loved?

Restless and disquieted, Lothair paced the long and lofty rooms which had been secured for him in a London hotel which rivalled the colossal convenience of Paris and the American cities. Their tawdry ornaments and their terrible new furniture would not do after the galleries and portraits of Vauxe. Lothair sighed.

Why did that visit ever end? Why did the world consist of anything else but Tudor palaces in ferny parks, or time be other than a perpetual Holy Week? He never sighed at Vauxe. Why? He supposed it was because there religion was his life, and here—

and he looked around him with a shudder. The Cardinal was right: it was a most happy thing for him to be living so much with so truly a religious family.

The door opened, and servants came in bearing a large and magnificent portfolio. It was of morocco and of prelatial purple with broad bands of gold and alternate ornaments of a cross and a coronet. A servant handed to Lothair a letter, which enclosed the key that opened its lock. The portfolio contained the plans and drawings of the cathedral.

Lothair was lost in admiration of these designs and their execution. But after the first fever of investigation was over, he required sympathy and also information. In a truly religious family there would always be a Father Coleman or a Monsignore Catesby to guide and to instruct. But a Protestant, if he wants aid or advice on any matter, can only go to his solicitor. But as he proceeded in his researches, he sensibly felt that the business was one above even an Oratorian or a Monsignore. It required a finer and a more intimate sympathy; a taste at the same time more inspired and more inspiring; some one who blended with divine convictions the graceful energy of human feeling, and who would not only animate him to effort but fascinate him to its fulfilment. The counsellor he required was Miss Arundel.

Lothair had quitted Vauxe one week, and it seemed to him a year. During the first four-and-twenty hours he felt like a child who had returned to school, and the day after like a man on a desert island. Various other forms of misery and misfortune were suggested by his succeeding experience. Town brought no distractions to him; he knew very few people, and these he had not yet encountered; he had

once ventured to White's, but found only a group of grey-headed men, who evidently did not know him, and who seemed to scan him with cynical nonchalance. These were not the golden youth who he had been assured by Bertram would greet him: so, after reading a newspaper for a moment upside downwards, he got away. But he had no harbour of refuge, and was obliged to ride down to Richmond and dine alone and meditate on symbols and celestial adumbrations. Every day he felt how inferior was this existence to that of a life in a truly religious family.

But of all the members of the family to which his memory recurred with such unflagging interest none more frequently engaged his thoughts than Miss Arundel. Her conversation, which stimulated his intelligence while it rather piqued his self-love, exercised a great influence over him, and he had omitted no opportunity of enjoying her society. That society and its animating power he sadly missed; and now that he had before him the very drawings about which they had frequently talked, and she was not by his side to suggest and sympathise and criticise and praise, he felt unusually depressed.

Lothair corresponded with Lady St. Jerome, and was aware of her intended movements. But the return of the family to London had been somewhat delayed. When this disappointment was first made known to him his impulse was to ride down to Vauxe; but the tact in which he was not deficient assured him that he ought not to reappear on a stage where he had already figured for perhaps too considerable a time; and so another week had to be passed, softened, however, by visits from the Father of the Oratory and the Chamberlain of his Holiness,

who came to look after Lothair with much friendliness, and with whom it was consolatory and even delightful for him to converse on sacred art, still holier things, and also Miss Arundel.

At length, though it seemed impossible, this second week elapsed, and to-morrow Lothair was to lunch with Lady St. Jerome in St. James's Square, and to meet all his friends. He thought of it all day, and he passed a restless night. He took an early canter to rally his energies, and his fancy was active in the splendour of the spring. The chestnuts were in silver bloom, and the pink May had flushed the thorns, and banks of sloping turf were radiant with plots of gorgeous flowers. The waters glittered in the sun, and the air was fragrant with that spell which only can be found in metropolitan mignonette. It was the hour and the season when heroic youth comes to great decisions, achieves exploits, or perpetrates scrapes.

Nothing could be more cordial, nothing more winning, than the reception of Lothair by Lady St. Jerome. She did not conceal her joy at their being again together. Even Miss Arundel, though still calm, even a little demure, seemed glad to see him: her eyes looked kind and pleased, and she gave him her hand with graceful heartiness. It was the sacred hour of two when Lothair arrived, and they were summoned to luncheon almost immediately. Then they were not alone; Lord St. Jerome was not there, but the priests were present and some others. Lothair, however, sat next to Miss Arundel.

'I have been thinking of you very often since I left Vauxe,' said Lothair to his neighbour.

'Charitably, I am sure.'

'I have been thinking of you every day,' he continued, 'for I wanted your advice.'

'Ah! but that is not a popular thing to give.'

'But it is precious: at least, yours is to me, and I want it now very much.'

'Father Coleman told me you had got the plans for the cathedral,' said Miss Arundel.

'And I want to show them to you.'

'I fear I am only a critic,' said Miss Arundel, 'and I do not admire mere critics. I was very free in my comments to you on several subjects at Vauxe; and I must now say I thought you bore it very kindly.'

'I was enchanted,' said Lothair, 'and desire nothing but to be ever subject to such remarks. But this affair of the cathedral, it is your own thought; I would fain hope your own wish, for unless it were your own wish I do not think I ever should be able to accomplish it.'

'And when the cathedral is built,' said Miss Arundel, 'what then?'

'Do you not remember telling me at Vauxe that all sacred buildings should be respected, for that in the long run they generally fell to the professors of the true faith?'

'But when they built St. Peter's, they dedicated it to a saint in heaven,' said Miss Arundel. 'To whom is yours to be inscribed?'

'To a saint in heaven and on earth,' said Lothair, blushing; 'to St. Clare.'

But Lady St. Jerome and her guests rose at this moment, and it is impossible to say with precision whether this last remark of Lothair absolutely reached the ear of Miss Arundel. She looked as if it had not. The priests and the other guests dispersed. Lothair

accompanied the ladies to the drawing-room: he lingered, and he was meditating if the occasion served to say more.

Lady St. Jerome was writing a note, Miss Arundel was arranging some work, Lothair was affecting an interest in her employment in order that he might be seated by her and ask her questions, when the groom of the chambers entered and enquired whether her ladyship was at home, and being answered in the affirmative retired, and announced and ushered in the Duchess and Lady Corisande.

CHAPTER XIX.

Uncertainty.

IT SEEMED that the Duchess and Lady St. Jerome were intimate, for they called each other by their Christian names, and kissed each other. The young ladies also were cordial. Her Grace greeted Lothair with heartiness; Lady Corisande with some reserve. Lothair thought she looked very radiant and very proud.

It was some time since they had all met, not since the end of the last season, so there was a great deal to talk about. There had been deaths and births and marriages, which required a flying comment; all important events: deaths which solved many difficulties, heirs to estates which were not expected, and weddings which surprised everybody.

'And have you seen Selina?' enquired Lady St. Jerome.

'Not yet; except mamma, this is our first visit,' replied the Duchess.

'Ah! that is real friendship! She came down to Vauxe the other day, but I did not think she was looking well. She frets herself too much about her

boys; she does not know what to do with them. They will not go into the Church, and they have no fortune for the Guards.'

'I understood that Lord Plantagenet was to be a civil engineer,' said Lady Corisande.

'And Lord Albert Victor to have a sheep-walk in Australia,' continued Lady St. Jerome.

'They say that a lord must not go to the bar,' said Miss Arundel. 'It seems to me very unjust.'

'Alfred Beaufort went the circuit,' said Lady Corisande, 'but I believe they drove him into Parliament.'

'You will miss your friend Bertram at Oxford,' said the Duchess, addressing Lothair.

'Indeed,' said Lothair, rather confused, for he was himself a defaulter in collegiate attendance. 'I was just going to write to him to see whether one could not keep half a term.'

'Oh! nothing will prevent his taking his degree,' said the Duchess, 'but I fear there must be some delay. There is a vacancy for our county: Mr. Sandstone is dead, and they insist upon returning Bertram. I hope he will be of age before the nomination. The Duke is much opposed to it; he wishes him to wait; but in these days it is not so easy for young men to get into Parliament. It is not as it used to be; we cannot choose.'

'This is an important event,' said Lothair to Lady Corisande.

'I think it is; nor do I believe Bertram is too young for public life. These are not times to be laggard.'

'There is no doubt they are very serious times,' said Lothair.

'I have every confidence in Bertram, in his ability and his principles.'

The ladies began to talk about the approaching Drawing-room and Lady Corisande's presentation, and Lothair thought it right to make his obeisance and withdraw. He met in the hall Father Coleman, who was in fact looking after him, and would have induced him to repair to the Father's room and hold some interesting conversation, but Lothair was not so congenial as usual. He was even abrupt, and the Father, who never pressed anything, assuming that Lothair had some engagement, relinquished with a serene brow, but not without chagrin, what he had deemed might have proved a golden opportunity.

And yet Lothair had no engagement, and did not know where to go or what to do with himself. But he wanted to be alone, and of all persons in the world at that moment, he had a sort of instinct that the one he wished least to converse with was Father Coleman.

'She has every confidence in his principles,' said Lothair to himself as he mounted his horse, 'and his principles were mine six months ago, when I was at Brentham. Delicious Brentham! It seems like a dream; but everything seems like a dream: I hardly know whether life is agony or bliss.'

CHAPTER XX.

The Lady Corisande.

THE Duke was one of the few gentlemen in London who lived in a palace. One of the half dozen of those stately structures that our capital boasts had fallen to his lot. An heir apparent to the throne, in the earlier days of the present dynasty, had resolved to be lodged as became a prince, and had raised, amid gardens which he had diverted from one of the royal parks, an edifice not unworthy of Vicenza in its best days, though on a far more extensive scale than any pile that favoured city boasts. Before the palace was finished the prince died, and irretrievably in debt. His executors were glad to sell to the trustees of the ancestors of the chief of the house of Brentham the incomplete palace, which ought never to have been commenced. The ancestor of the Duke was by no means so strong a man as the Duke himself, and prudent people rather murmured at the exploit. But it was what is called a lucky family; that is to say, a family with a charm that always attracted and absorbed heiresses; and perhaps the splendour of Crecy House,

for it always retained its original title, might have in some degree contributed to fascinate the taste or imagination of the beautiful women who, generation after generation, brought their bright castles and their broad manors to swell the state and rent-rolls of the family who were so kind to Lothair.

The centre of Crecy House consisted of a hall of vast proportion, and reaching to the roof. Its walls commemorated, in paintings by the most celebrated artists of the age, the exploits of the Black Prince; and its coved ceiling, in panels resplendent with Venetian gold, was bright with the forms and portraits of English heroes. A corridor round this hall contained the most celebrated private collection of pictures in England, and opened into a series of sumptuous saloons.

It was a rather early hour when Lothair, the morning after his meeting the Duchess at Lady St. Jerome's, called at Crecy House; but it was only to leave his card. He would not delay for a moment paying his respects there, and yet he shrank from thrusting himself immediately into the circle. The Duke's brougham was in the courtyard. Lothair was holding his groom's horse, who had dismounted, when the hall-door opened and his Grace and Bertram came forth.

'Halloa, old fellow!' exclaimed Bertram, 'only think of your being here. It seems an age since we met. The Duchess was telling us about you at breakfast.'

'Go in and see them,' said the Duke, 'there is a large party at luncheon; Victoria Montairy is there. Bertram and I are obliged to go to Lincoln's Inn, something about his election.'

But Lothair murmured thanks and declined.

'What are you going to do with yourself to-day?' said the Duke. And Lothair hesitating, his Grace continued: 'Well then, come and dine with us.'

'Of course you will come, old fellow. I have not seen you since you left Oxford at the beginning of the year. And then we can settle about your term.' And Lothair consenting, they drove away.

It was nine o'clock before they dined. The days were getting very long, and soft, and sweet; the riding parties lingered amid the pink May and the tender twilight breeze. The Montairys dined that day at Crecy House, and a charming married daughter without her husband, and Lord and Lady Clanmorne, who were near kin to the Duchess, and themselves so good-looking and agreeable that they were as good at a dinner-party as a couple of first-rate entrées. There was also Lord Carisbrooke, a young man of distinguished air and appearance; his own master, with a large estate, and three years or so older than Lothair.

They dined in the Chinese saloon, which was of moderate dimensions, but bright with fantastic forms and colours, brilliantly lit up. It was the privilege of Lothair to hand the Duchess to her seat. He observed that Lord Carisbrooke was placed next to Lady Corisande, though he had not taken her out.

'This dinner reminds me of my visit to Brentham,' said Lothair.

'Almost the same party,' said the Duchess.

'The visit to Brentham was the happiest time of my life,' said Lothair moodily.

'But you have seen a great deal since,' said the Duchess.

'I am not so sure it is of any use seeing things,' said Lothair.

When the ladies retired, there was some talk about horses. Lord Carisbrooke was breeding; Lothair thought it was a duty to breed, but not to go on the turf. Lord Carisbrooke thought there could be no good breeding without racing; Lothair was of opinion that races might be confined to one's own parks, with no legs admitted, and immense prizes, which must cause emulation. Then they joined the ladies, and then, in a short time, there was music. Lothair hovered about Lady Corisande, and at last seized a happy opportunity of addressing her.

'I shall never forget your singing at Brentham,' he said; 'at first I thought it might be as Lady Montairy said, because I was not used to fine singing; but I heard the Venusina the other day, and I prefer your voice and style.'

'Have you heard the Venusina?' said Lady Corisande with animation; 'I know nothing that I look forward to with more interest. But I was told she was not to open her mouth until she appeared at the opera. Where did you hear her?'

'Oh, I heard her,' said Lothair, 'at the Roman Catholic Cathedral.'

'I am sure I shall never hear her there,' said Lady Corisande, looking very grave.

'Do not you think music a powerful accessory to religion?' said Lothair, but a little embarrassed.

'Within certain limits,' said Lady Corisande, 'the limits I am used to; but I should prefer to hear opera singers at the opera.'

'Ah! if all amateurs could sing like you,' said Lothair, 'that would be unnecessary. But a fine

mass by Mozart requires great skill as well as power to render it. I admire no one so much as Mozart, and especially his masses. I have been hearing a great many of them lately.'

'So we understood,' said Lady Corisande rather dryly, and looking about her as if she were not much interested, or at any rate not much gratified, by the conversation.

Lothair felt he was not getting on, and he wished to get on; but he was socially inexperienced, and his resources not much in hand. There was a pause; it seemed to him an awkward pause; and then Lady Corisande walked away and addressed Lady Clanmorne.

Some very fine singing began at this moment; the room was hushed, no one moved, and Lothair, undisturbed, had the opportunity of watching his late companion. There was something in Lady Corisande that to him was irresistibly captivating; and as he was always thinking and analysing, he employed himself in discovering the cause. 'She is not particularly gracious,' he said to himself, 'at least not to me; she is beautiful, but so are others; and others, like her, are clever, perhaps more clever. But there is something in her brow, her glance, her carriage, which indicates what they call character, and interests me. Six months ago I was in love with her, because I thought she was like her sisters. I love her sisters, but she is not the least like them.'

The music ceased; Lothair moved away, and he approached the Duke.

'I have a favour to ask your Grace,' he said. 'I have made up my mind that I shall not go back to Oxford this term; would you do me the great favour of presenting me at the next Levée?'

CHAPTER XXI.

Lothair Enters Society.

ONE'S life changes in a moment. Half a month ago, Lothair, without an acquaintance, was meditating his return to Oxford. Now he seemed to know everybody who was anybody. His table was overflowing with invitations to all the fine houses in town. First came the routs and the balls; then, when he had been presented to the husbands, came the dinners. His kind friends the Duchess and Lady St. Jerome were the fairies who had worked this sudden scene of enchantment. A single word from them, and London was at Lothair's feet.

He liked it amazingly. He quite forgot the conclusion at which he had arrived respecting society a year ago, drawn from his vast experience of the single party which he had then attended. Feelings are different when you know a great many persons, and every person is trying to please you; above all, when there are individuals whom you want to meet, and when, if you do not meet them, you become restless.

Town was beginning to blaze. Broughams whirled and bright barouches glanced, troops of social cavalry cantered and caracoled in morning rides, and the bells of prancing ponies, lashed by delicate hands, jingled in the laughing air. There were stoppages in Bond Street, which seems to cap the climax of civilisation, after crowded clubs and swarming parks.

But the great event of the season was the presentation of Lady Corisande. Truly our bright maiden of Brentham woke and found herself famous. There are families whom everybody praises, and families who are treated in a different way. Either will do; all the sons and daughters of the first succeed, all the sons and daughters of the last are encouraged in perverseness by the prophetic determination of society. Half a dozen married sisters, who were the delight and ornament of their circles, in the case of Lady Corisande were good precursors of popularity; but the world would not be content with that: they credited her with all their charms and winning qualities, but also with something grander and beyond comparison; and from the moment her fair cheek was sealed by the gracious approbation of Majesty, all the critics of the Court at once recognised her as the cynosure of the empyrean.

Monsignore Catesby, who looked after Lothair, and was always breakfasting with him without the necessity of an invitation (a fascinating man, and who talked upon all subjects except High Mass), knew everything that took place at Court without being present there himself. He led the conversation to the majestic theme, and while he seemed to be busied in breaking an egg with delicate precision, and hardly listening to the frank expression of opinions which he

carelessly encouraged, obtained a not insufficient share of Lothair's views and impressions of human beings and affairs in general during the last few days, which had witnessed a Levée and a Drawing-room.

'Ah! then you were so fortunate as to know the beauty before her début,' said the Monsignore.

'Intimately; her brother is my friend. I was at Brentham last summer. Delicious place! and the most agreeable visit I ever made in my life, at least, one of the most agreeable.'

'Ah! ah!' said the Monsignore. 'Let me ring for some toast.'

On the night of the Drawing-room, a great ball was given at Crecy House to celebrate the entrance of Corisande into the world. It was a sumptuous festival. The palace, resonant with fantastic music, blazed amid illumined gardens rich with summer warmth.

A prince of the blood was dancing with Lady Corisande. Lothair was there, *vis-à-vis* with Miss Arundel.

'I delight in this hall,' she said to Lothair; 'but how superior the pictured scene to the reality!'

'What! would you like, then, to be in a battle?'

'I should like to be with heroes, wherever they might be. What a fine character was the Black Prince! And they call those days the days of superstition!'

The silver horns sounded a brave flourish. Lothair had to advance and meet Lady Corisande. Her approaching mien was full of grace and majesty, but Lothair thought there was a kind expression in her glance, which seemed to remember Brentham, and that he was her brother's friend.

A little later in the evening he was her partner. He could not refrain from congratulating her on the beauty and the success of the festival.

'I am glad you are pleased, and I am glad you think it successful; but, you know, I am no judge, for this is my first ball!'

'Ah! to be sure; and yet it seems impossible,' he continued, in a tone of murmuring admiration.

'Oh! I have been at little dances at my sisters'; half behind the door,' she added, with a slight smile. 'But to-night I am present at a scene of which I have only read.'

'And how do you like balls?' said Lothair.

'I think I shall like them very much,' said Lady Corisande; 'but to-night, I will confess, I am a little nervous.'

'You do not look so.'

'I am glad of that.'

'Why?'

'Is it not a sign of weakness?'

'Can feeling be weakness?'

'Feeling without sufficient cause is, I should think.' And then, in a tone of some archness, she said, 'And how do you like balls?'

'Well, I like them amazingly,' said Lothair. 'They seem to me to have every quality which can render an entertainment agreeable: music, light, flowers, beautiful faces, graceful forms, and occasionally charming conversation.'

'Yes; and that never lingers,' said Lady Corisande, 'for see, I am wanted.'

When they were again undisturbed, Lothair regretted the absence of Bertram, who was kept at the House.

'It is a great disappointment,' said Lady Corisande; 'but he will yet arrive, though late. I should be most unhappy though, if he were absent from his post on such an occasion. I am sure if he were here I could not dance.'

'You are a most ardent politician,' said Lothair.

'Oh! I do not care in the least about common politics, parties and office and all that; I neither regard nor understand them,' replied Lady Corisande. 'But when wicked men try to destroy the country, then I like my family to be in the front.'

As the destruction of the country meditated this night by wicked men was some change in the status of the Church of England, which Monsignore Catesby in the morning had suggested to Lothair as both just and expedient and highly conciliatory, Lothair did not pursue the theme, for he had a greater degree of tact than usually falls to the lot of the ingenuous.

The bright moments flew on. Suddenly there was a mysterious silence in the hall, followed by a kind of suppressed stir. Everyone seemed to be speaking with bated breath, or, if moving, walking on tiptoe. It was the supper hour.

Soft hour which wakes the wish and melts the heart.

Royalty, followed by the imperial presence of ambassadors, and escorted by a group of dazzling duchesses and paladins of high degree, was ushered with courteous pomp by the host and hostess into a choice saloon, hung with rose-coloured tapestry and illumined by chandeliers of crystal, where they were served from gold plate. But the thousand less favoured were not badly off, when they found themselves in the more capacious chambers, into which they rushed

with an eagerness hardly in keeping with the splendid nonchalance of the preceding hours.

'What a perfect family,' exclaimed Hugo Bohun, as he extracted a couple of fat little birds from their bed of aspic jelly; 'everything they do in such perfect taste. How safe you were here to have ortolans for supper!'

All the little round tables, though their number was infinite, were full. Male groups hung about; some in attendance on fair dames, some foraging for themselves, some thoughtful and more patient and awaiting a satisfactory future. Never was such an elegant clatter.

'I wonder where Carisbrooke is,' said Hugo Bohun. 'They say he is wonderfully taken with the beauteous daughter of the house.'

'I will back the Duke of Brecon against him,' said one of his companions. 'He raved about her at White's yesterday.'

'Hem!'

'The end is not so near as all that,' said a third wassailer.

'I do not know that,' said Hugo Bohun. 'It is a family that marries off quickly. If a fellow is obliged to marry, he always likes to marry one of them.'

'What of this new star?' said his friend, and he mentioned Lothair.

'Oh! he is too young; not launched. Besides he is going to turn Catholic, and I doubt whether that would do in that quarter.'

'But he has a greater fortune than any of them.'

'Immense! A man I know, who knows another man——' and then he began a long statistical story about Lothair's resources.

'Have you got any room here, Hugo?' drawled out Lord St. Aldegonde.

'Plenty, and here is my chair.'

'On no account; half of it and some soup will satisfy me.'

'I should have thought you would have been with the swells,' said Hugo Bohun.

'That does not exactly suit me,' said St. Aldegonde. 'I was ticketed to the Duchess of Salop, but I got a first-rate substitute with the charm of novelty for her Grace, and sent her in with Lothair.'

St. Aldegonde was the heir apparent of the wealthiest, if not the most ancient, dukedom in the United Kingdom. He was spoiled, but he knew it. Had he been an ordinary being, he would have merely subsided into selfishness and caprice, but having good abilities and a good disposition, he was eccentric, adventurous, and sentimental. Notwithstanding the apathy which had been engendered by premature experience, St. Aldegonde held extreme opinions, especially on political affairs, being a republican of the reddest dye. He was opposed to all privilege, and indeed to all orders of men, except dukes, who were a necessity. He was also strongly in favour of the equal division of all property, except land. Liberty depended on land, and the greater the landowners, the greater the liberty of a country. He would hold forth on this topic even with energy, amazed at anyone differing from him; 'as if a fellow could have too much land,' he would urge with a voice and glance which defied contradiction. St. Aldegonde had married for love, and he loved his wife, but he was strongly in favour of woman's rights and their extremest consequences. It was thought that he had

originally adopted these latter views with the amiable intention of piquing Lady St. Aldegonde; but if so, he had not succeeded. Beaming with brightness, with the voice and airiness of a bird, and a cloudless temper, Albertha St. Aldegonde had, from the first hour of her marriage, concentrated her intelligence, which was not mean, on one object; and that was never to cross her husband on any conceivable topic. They had been married several years, and she treated him as a darling spoiled child. When he cried for the moon, it was promised him immediately; however irrational his proposition, she always assented to it, though generally by tact and vigilance she guided him in the right direction. Nevertheless, St. Aldegonde was sometimes in scrapes; but then he always went and told his best friend, whose greatest delight was to extricate him from his perplexities and embarrassments.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Flying Trip to Oxford.

ALTHOUGH Lothair was not in the slightest degree shaken in his conviction that life should be entirely religious, he was perplexed by the inevitable obstacles which seemed perpetually to oppose themselves to the practice of his opinions. It was not merely pleasure in its multiform appearances that he had to contend against, but business began imperiously to solicit his attention. Every month brought him nearer to his majority, and the frequent letters from Mr. Putney Giles now began to assume the pressing shape of solicitations for personal interviews. He had a long conversation one morning with Father Coleman on this subject, who greatly relieved him by the assurance that a perfectly religious life was one of which the sovereign purpose was to uphold the interests of the Church; of Christ, the Father added after a momentary pause. Business, and even amusement, were not only compatible with such a purpose, but might even be conducive to its fulfilment.

Mr. Putney Giles reminded Lothair that the attainment of his majority must be celebrated, and in a becoming manner. Preparation, and even consider-

able preparation, was necessary. There were several scenes of action; some very distant. It was not too early to contemplate arrangements. Lothair really must confer with his guardians. They were both now in town, the Scotch uncle having come up to attend Parliament. Could they be brought together? Was it indeed impossible? If so, who was to give the necessary instructions?

It was much more than a year since Lothair had met his uncle, and he did not anticipate much satisfaction from the renewal of their intimacy; but every feeling of propriety demanded that it should be recognised, and to a certain degree revived. Lord Culloden was a black Scotchman, tall and lean, with good features, a hard red face and iron-grey hair. He was a man who shrank from scenes, and he greeted Lothair as if they had only parted yesterday. Looking at him with his keen, unsentimental, but not unkind eye, he said, 'Well, sir, I thought you would have been at Oxford.'

'Yes, my dear uncle; but circumstances——'

'Well, well, I don't want to hear the cause. I am very glad you are not there; I believe you might as well be at Rome.'

And then in due course, and after some talk of the past and old times, Lothair referred to the suggestions of Mr. Giles, and hinted at a meeting of his guardians to confer and advise together.

'No, no,' said the Scotch peer, shaking his head; 'I will have nothing to do with the Scarlet Lady. Mr. Giles is an able and worthy man; he may well be trusted to draw up a programme for our consideration, and indeed it is an affair in which yourself should be most consulted. Let all be done liberally,

for you have a great inheritance, and I would be no curmudgeon in these matters.'

'Well, my dear uncle, whatever is arranged, I hope you and my cousins will honour and gratify me with your presence throughout the proceedings.'

'Well, well, it is not much in my way. You will be having balls and fine ladies. There is no fool like an old fool, they say; but I think, from what I hear, the young fools will beat us in the present day. Only think of young persons going over to the Church of Rome. Why, they are just naturals!'

The organising genius of Mr. Putney Giles had rarely encountered a more fitting theme than the celebration of the impending majority. There was place for all his energy and talent and resources: a great central inauguration; sympathetical festivals and gatherings in half a dozen other counties; the troth, as it were, of a sister kingdom to be pledged; a vista of balls and banquets, and illuminations and addresses, of ceaseless sports and speeches, and processions alike endless.

'What I wish to effect,' said Mr. Giles, as he was giving his multifarious orders, 'is to produce among all classes an impression adequate to the occasion. I wish the lord and the tenantry alike to feel they have a duty to perform.'

In the meantime, Monsignore Catesby was pressing Lothair to become one of the patrons of a Roman Catholic Bazaar, where Lady St. Jerome and Miss Arundel were to preside over a stall. It was of importance to show that charity was not the privilege of any particular creed.

Between his lawyers, and his monsignores, and his architects, Lothair began to get a little harassed.

He was disturbed in his own mind, too, on greater matters, and seemed to feel every day that it was more necessary to take a decided step, and more impossible to decide upon what it should be. He frequently saw the Cardinal, who was very kind to him, but who had become more reserved on religious subjects. He had dined more than once with his Eminence, and had met some distinguished prelates and some of his fellow nobles who had been weaned from the errors of their cradle. The Cardinal perhaps thought that the presence of these eminent converts would facilitate the progress, perhaps the decision, of his ward; but something seemed always to happen to divert Lothair in his course. It might be sometimes apparently a very slight cause, but yet for the time sufficient; a phrase of Lady Corisande for example, who, though she never directly addressed him on the subject, was nevertheless deeply interested in his spiritual condition.

'You ought to speak to him, Bertram,' she said one day to her brother very indignantly, as she read a fresh paragraph alluding to an impending conversion. 'You are his friend. What is the use of friendship, if not in such a crisis as this?'

'I see no use in speaking to a man about love or religion,' said Bertram, 'they are both stronger than friendship. If there be any foundation for the paragraph, my interference would be of no avail; if there be none, I should only make myself ridiculous.'

Nevertheless, Bertram looked a little more after his friend, and disturbing the Monsignore, who was at breakfast with Lothair one morning, Bertram obstinately outstayed the priest, and then said: 'I tell

you what, old fellow, you are rather hippish; I wish you were in the House of Commons.'

'So do I,' said Lothair, with a sigh; 'but I have come into everything ready-made. I begin to think it very unfortunate.'

'What are you going to do with yourself to-day? If you be disengaged, I vote we dine together at White's, and then we will go down to the House. I will take you to the smoking-room and introduce you to Bright, and we will trot him out on primogeniture.'

At this moment the servant brought Lothair two letters; one was an epistle from Father Coleman, meeting Lothair's objections to becoming a patron of the Roman Catholic Bazaar in a very unctuous and exhaustive manner; and the other from his stud-groom at Oxford, detailing some of those disagreeable things which will happen with absent masters who will not answer letters. Lothair loved his stable, and felt particularly anxious to avoid the threatened visit of Father Coleman on the morrow. His decision was rapid. 'I must go down this afternoon to Oxford, my dear fellow. My stable is in confusion. I shall positively return to-morrow, and I will dine with you at White's, and we will go to the House of Commons together or go to the play.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

Beauty in Distress.

LOTHAIR'S stables were about three miles from Oxford. They were a rather considerable establishment, in which he had taken much interest, and having always intended to return to Oxford in the early part of the year, although he had occasionally sent for a hack or two to London, his stud had been generally maintained.

The morning after his arrival, he rode over to the stables, where he had ordered his drag to be ready. About a quarter of a mile before he reached his place of destination he observed at some little distance a crowd in the road, and, hastening on, perceived as he drew nearer a number of men clustered round a dismantled vehicle, and vainly endeavouring to extricate and raise a fallen horse; its companion, panting and foaming, with broken harness but apparently uninjured, standing aside and held by a boy. Somewhat apart stood a lady alone. Lothair immediately dismounted and approached her, saying, 'I fear you are in trouble, madam. Perhaps I may be of service?'

The lady was rather tall and of a singularly distinguished presence. Her air and her costume alike intimated high breeding and fashion. She seemed quite serene amid the tumult and confusion, and apparently the recent danger. As Lothair spoke, she turned her head to him, which had been at first a little averted, and he beheld a striking countenance, but one which he instantly felt he did not see for the first time.

She bowed with dignity to Lothair, and said in a low but distinct voice, 'You are most courteous, sir. We have had a sad accident, but a great escape. Our horses ran away with us, and had it not been for that heap of stones I do not see how we could have been saved.'

'Fortunately my stables are at hand,' said Lothair, 'and I have a carriage waiting for me at this moment, not a quarter of a mile away. It is at your service, and I will send for it;' and his groom, to whom he gave directions, galloped off.

There was a shout as the fallen horse was on his legs again, much cut, and the carriage shattered and useless. A gentleman came from the crowd and approached the lady. He was tall and fair and not ill-favoured, with fine dark eyes and high cheek bones, and still young, though an enormous beard at the first glance gave him an impression of years the burthen of which he really did not bear. His dress, though not vulgar, was richer and more showy than is usual in this country, and altogether there was something in his manner which, though calm and full of self-respect, was different from the conventional refinement of England. Yet he was apparently an Englishman, as he said to the lady, 'It is a bad business,

but we must be thankful it is no worse. What troubles me is how you are to get back. It will be a terrible walk over these stony roads, and I can hear of no conveyance.'

'My husband,' said the lady, as with dignity she presented the person to Lothair. 'This gentleman,' she continued, 'has most kindly offered us the use of his carriage, which is almost at hand.'

'Sir, you are a friend,' said the gentleman. 'I thought there were no horses that I could not master, but it seems I am mistaken. I bought these only yesterday; took a fancy to them as we were driving about, and bought them of a dealer in the road.'

'That seems a clever animal,' said Lothair, pointing to the one uninjured.

'Ah! you like horses?' said the gentleman.

'Well, I have some taste that way.'

'We are visitors to Oxford,' said the lady. 'Colonel Campian, like all Americans, is very interested in the ancient parts of England.'

'To-day we were going to Blenheim,' said the Colonel; 'but I thought I would try these new tits a bit on a byroad, first.'

'All's well that ends well,' said Lothair; 'and there is no reason why you should not fulfil your intention of going to Blenheim, for here is my carriage, and it is entirely at your service for the whole day, and, indeed, as long as you stay at Oxford.'

'Sir, there requires no coronet on your carriage to tell me you are a nobleman,' said the Colonel. 'I like frank manners, and I like your team. I know few things that would please me more than to try them.'

They were four roans, highly bred, with black manes and tails. They had the Arab eye, with

arched necks, and seemed proud of themselves and their master.

'I do not see why we should not go to Blenheim,' said the Colonel.

'Well, not to-day,' said the lady, 'I think. We have had an escape, but one feels these things a little more afterwards than at the time. I would rather go back to Oxford and be quiet; and there is more than one college which you have not yet seen.'

'My team is entirely at your service wherever you go,' said Lothair; 'but I cannot venture to drive you to Oxford, for I am there *in statu pupillari*, and a proctor might arrest us all. But perhaps,' and he approached the lady, 'you will permit me to call on you to-morrow, when I hope I may find you have not suffered by this misadventure.'

'We have got a professor dining with us to-day at seven o'clock,' said the Colonel, 'at our hotel; and if you are disengaged and would join the party, you would add to the favours which you know so well how to confer.'

Lothair handed the lady into the carriage, the Colonel mounted the box and took the ribbons like a master, and the four roans trotted away with their precious charge and their two grooms behind with folded arms and imperturbable countenances.

Lothair watched the equipage until it vanished in the distance.

'It is impossible to forget that countenance,' he said; 'and I fancy I did hear at the time that she had married an American. Well, I shall meet her at dinner, that is something.' And he sprang into his saddle,

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Oxford Professor.

HE Oxford Professor, who was the guest of the American Colonel, was quite a young man, of advanced opinions on all subjects, religious, social and political. He was clever, extremely well-informed, so far as books can make a man knowing, but unable to profit even by that limited experience of life from a restless vanity and overflowing conceit, which prevented him from ever observing or thinking of anything but himself. He was gifted with a great command of words, which took the form of endless exposition, varied by sarcasm and passages of ornate jargon. He was the last person one would have expected to recognise in an Oxford professor; but we live in times of transition.

A Parisian man of science, who had passed his life in alternately fighting at barricades and discovering planets, had given Colonel Campian, who had lived much in the French capital, a letter of introduction to the Professor, whose invectives against the principles of English society were hailed by foreigners as representative of the sentiments of venerable Oxford. The

Professor, who was not satisfied with his home career, and, like many men of his order of mind, had dreams of wild vanity which the New World, they think, can alone realise, was very glad to make the Colonel's acquaintance, which might facilitate his future movements. So he had lionised the distinguished visitors during the last few days over the University, and had availed himself of plenteous opportunities for exhibiting to them his celebrated powers of exposition, his talent for sarcasm, which he deemed peerless, and several highly finished picturesque passages, which were introduced with extemporary art.

The Professor was much surprised when he saw Lothair enter the saloon at the hotel. He was the last person in Oxford whom he expected to encounter. Like sedentary men of extreme opinions, he was a social parasite, and instead of indulging in his usual invectives against peers and princes, finding himself unexpectedly about to dine with one of that class, he was content only to dazzle and amuse him.

Mrs. Campian entered the room only when dinner was announced. She greeted Lothair with calmness but amenity, and took his offered arm.

'You have not suffered, I hope?' said Lothair.

'Very little, and through your kindness.'

It was a peculiar voice, low and musical, too subdued to call thrilling, but a penetrating voice, so that however ordinary the observation it attracted and impressed attention. But it was in harmony with all her appearance and manner. Lothair thought he had never seen anyone or anything so serene; the serenity, however, not of humbleness, nor of merely conscious innocence; it was not devoid of a degree of majesty; what one pictures of Olympian repose. And

the countenance was Olympian: a Phidian face, with large grey eyes and dark lashes; wonderful hair, abounding without art, and gathered together by Grecian fillets.

The talk was of Oxford, and was at first chiefly maintained by the Colonel and the Professor.

'And do you share Colonel Campian's feeling about Old England?' enquired Lothair of his hostess.

'The present interests me more than the past,' said the lady, 'and the future more than the present.'

'The present seems to me as unintelligible as the future,' said Lothair.

'I think it is intelligible,' said the lady, with a faint smile. 'It has many faults, but not, I think the want of clearness.'

'I am not a destructive,' said the Professor, addressing the Colonel but speaking loudly; 'I would maintain Oxford under any circumstances with the necessary changes.'

'And what are those, might I ask?' enquired Lothair.

'In reality not much. I would get rid of the religion.'

'Get rid of the religion!' said Lothair.

'You have got rid of it once,' said the Professor.

'You have altered, you have what people call reformed it,' said Lothair, 'but you have not abolished or banished it from the University.'

'The shock would not be greater, nor so great, as the change from the Papal to the Reformed Faith. Besides, Universities have nothing to do with religion.'

'I thought Universities were universal,' said Lothair, 'and had something to do with everything.'

'I cannot conceive any society of any kind without religion,' said the lady.

Lothair glanced at her beautiful brow with devotion as she uttered these words.

Colonel Campian began to talk about horses. After that the Professor proved to him that he was related to Edmund Campian the Jesuit; and then he got to the Gunpowder Plot, which he was not sure, if successful, might not have beneficially influenced the course of our history. Probably the Irish difficulty would not then have existed.

'I dislike plots,' said the lady; 'they always fail.'

'And whatever their object, are they not essentially immoral?' said Lothair.

'I have more faith in ideas than in persons,' said the lady. 'When a truth is uttered, it will sooner or later be recognised. It is only an affair of time. It is better that it should mature and naturally germinate than be forced.'

'You would reduce us to lotus-eaters,' exclaimed the Professor. 'Action is natural to man. And what, after all, are conspiracies and revolutions but great principles in violent action?'

'I think you must be an admirer of repose,' said Lothair to the lady, in a low voice.

'Because I have seen something of action in my life,' said the lady, 'and it is an experience of wasted energies and baffled thoughts.'

When they returned to the saloon, the Colonel and the Professor became interested in the constitution and discipline of the American Universities. Lothair hung about the lady, who was examining some views of Oxford, and who was ascertaining what she had seen and what she had omitted to

visit. They were thinking of returning home on the morrow.

'Without seeing Blenheim?' said Lothair.

'Without seeing Blenheim,' said the lady; 'I confess to a pang; but I shall always associate with that name your great kindness to us.'

'But cannot we for once enter into a conspiracy together,' said Lothair, 'and join in a happy plot and contrive to go? Besides I could take you to the private gardens, for the Duke has given me a perpetual order, and they are really exquisite.'

The lady seemed to smile.

'Theodora,' said the Colonel, speaking from the end of the room, 'what have you settled about your train to-morrow?'

'We want to stay another day here,' said Theodora, 'and go to Blenheim.'

CHAPTER XXV.

A New Divinity.

HEY were in the private gardens at Blenheim. The sun was brilliant over the ornate and yet picturesque scene.

'Beautiful, is it not?' exclaimed Lothair.

'Yes, certainly beautiful,' said Theodora. 'But, do you know, I do not feel altogether content in these fine gardens. The principle of exclusion on which they are all founded is to me depressing. I require in all things sympathy. You would not agree with me in this. The manners of your country are founded on exclusion.'

'But surely there are times and places when one would like to be alone?'

'Without doubt,' said the lady, 'only I do not like artificial loneliness. Even your parks, which all the world praises, do not quite satisfy me. I prefer a forest where all may go, even the wild beasts.'

'But forests are not at command,' said Lothair.

'So you make a solitude and call it peace,' said the lady, with a slight smile. 'For my part, my perfect life would be a large and beautiful village. I ad-

mire nature, but I require the presence of humanity. Life in great cities is too exhausting; but in my village there should be air, streams, and beautiful trees, a picturesque scene, but enough of my fellow-creatures to ensure constant duty.'

'But the fulfilment of duty and society founded on what you call the principle of exclusion, are not incompatible,' said Lothair.

'No, but difficult. What should be natural becomes an art; and in every art it is only the few who can be first-rate.'

'I have an ambition to be a first-rate artist in that respect,' said Lothair thoughtfully.

'That does you much honour,' she replied, 'for you necessarily embark in a most painful enterprise. The toiling multitude have their sorrows which, I believe, will some day be softened, and obstacles hard to overcome; but I have always thought that the feeling of satiety, almost inseparable from large possessions, is a surer cause of misery than ungratified desires.'

'It seems to me that there is a great deal to do,' said Lothair.

'I think so,' said the lady.

'Theodora,' said the Colonel, who was a little in advance with the Professor, and turning round his head, 'this reminds me of Mirabel,' and he pointed to the undulating banks covered with rare shrubs and touching the waters of the lake.

'And where is Mirabel?' said Lothair.

'It was a green island in the Adriatic,' said the lady, 'which belonged to Colonel Campian; we lost it in the troubles. Colonel Campian was very fond of it. I try to persuade him that our home was of

volcanic origin, and has only vanished and subsided into its native bed.'

'And were not you fond of it?'

'I never think of the past,' said the lady.

'Oxford is not the first place where I had the pleasure of meeting you,' Lothair ventured at length to observe.

'Yes, we have met before, in Hyde Park Gardens. Our hostess is a clever woman, and has been very kind to some friends of mine.'

'And have you seen her lately?'

'She comes to see us sometimes. We do not live in London, but in the vicinity. We only go to London for the opera, of which we are devotees. We do not at all enter general society; Colonel Campian only likes people who interest or amuse him, and he is fortunate in having rather a numerous acquaintance of that kind.'

'Rare fortune!' said Lothair.

'Colonel Campian lived a great deal at Paris before we married,' said the lady, 'and in a circle of considerable culture and excitement. He is social, but not conventional.'

'And you, are you conventional?'

'Well, I live only for climate and the affections,' said the lady. 'I am fond of society that pleases me, that is accomplished and natural and ingenious; otherwise I prefer being alone. As for atmosphere, as I look upon it as the main source of felicity, you may be surprised that I should reside in your country. I should myself like to go to America, but that would not suit Colonel Campian; and if we are to live in Europe we must live in England. It is not pleasant to reside in a country where, if you happen to shelter

or succour a friend, you may be subject to a domiciliary visit.'

The Professor stopped to deliver a lecture or address on the villa of Hadrian. Nothing could be more minute or picturesque than his description of that celebrated pleasaunce. It was varied by portraits of the Emperor and some of his companions, and, after a rapid glance at the fortunes of the imperial patriciate, wound up with some conclusions favourable to communism. It was really very clever, and would have made the fortune of a literary society.

'I wonder if they had gravel walks in the villa of Hadrian,' said the Colonel. 'What I admire most in your country, my lord, are your gravel walks, though that lady would not agree with me in that matter.'

'You are against gravel walks,' said Lothair.

'Well, I cannot bring myself to believe that they had gravel walks in the garden of Eden,' said the lady.

They had a repast at Woodstock, too late for luncheon, too early for dinner, but which it was agreed should serve as the latter meal.

'That suits me exactly,' said the lady; 'I am a great foe to dinners, and indeed to all meals. I think when the good time comes we shall give up eating in public, except perhaps fruit on a green bank with music.'

It was a rich twilight as they drove home, the lady leaning back in the carriage silent. Lothair sat opposite to her, and gazed upon a countenance on which the moon began to glisten, and which seemed unconscious of all human observation.

He had read of such countenances in Grecian dreams: in Corinthian temples, in fanes of Ephesus, in the radiant shadows of divine groves.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'Is It a Dream?'

HEN they had arrived at the hotel, Colonel Campian proposed that they should come in and have some coffee, but Theodora did not enforce this suggestion, and Lothair, feeling that she might be wearied, gracefully, though unwillingly, waived the proposal. Remembering that on the noon of the morrow they were to depart, with a happy inspiration, as he said farewell, he asked permission to accompany them to the station.

Lothair walked away with the Professor, who seemed in a conservative vein, and graciously disposed to make several concessions to the customs of an ancient country. Though opposed to the land laws, he would operate gradually, and gave Lothair more than one receipt how to save the aristocracy. Lothair would have preferred talking about the lady they had just quitted, but as he soon found the Professor could really give him no information about her he let the subject drop.

But not out of his own mind. He was glad to be alone and brood over the last two days. They were

among the most interesting of his life. He had encountered a character different from any he had yet met, had listened to new views, and his intelligence had been stimulated by remarks made casually in easy conversation, and yet to him pregnant with novel and sometimes serious meaning. The voice, too, lingered in his ear, so hushed and deep and yet so clear and sweet. He leant over his mantelpiece in teeming reverie.

'And she is profoundly religious,' he said to himself; 'she can conceive no kind of society without religion. She has arrived at the same conclusion as myself. What a privilege it would be to speak to her on such subjects!'

After a restless night the morrow came. About eleven o'clock Lothair ventured to call on his new friends. The lady was alone; she was standing by the window reading an Italian newspaper, which she folded up and placed aside when Lothair was announced.

'We propose to walk to the station,' said Theodora; 'the servants have gone on. Colonel Campian has a particular aversion to moving with any luggage. He restricts me to this,' she said, pointing to her satchel, in which she had placed the foreign newspaper, 'and for that he will not be responsible.'

'It was most kind of you to permit me to accompany you this morning,' said Lothair; 'I should have been grieved to have parted abruptly last night.'

'I could not refuse such a request,' said the lady; 'but, do you know, I never like to say farewell, even for four-and-twenty hours. One should vanish like a spirit.'

'Then I have erred,' said Lothair, 'against your rules and principles.'

'Say my fancies,' said the lady, 'my humours, my whims. Besides this is not a farewell. You will come and see us. Colonel Campian tells me you have promised to give us that pleasure.'

'It will be the greatest pleasure to me,' said Lothair; 'I can conceive nothing greater.' And then hesitating a little, and a little blushing, he added, 'When do you think I might come?'

'Whenever you like,' said the lady, 'you will always find me at home. My life is this: I ride every day very early, and far into the country, so I return tamed some two or three hours after noon, and devote myself to my friends. We are at home every evening, except opera nights, and let me tell you, because it is not the custom generally among your compatriots, we are always at home on Sundays.'

Colonel Campian entered the room; the moment of departure was at hand. Lothair felt the consolation of being their companion to the station. He had once hoped it might be possible to be their companion in the train; but he was not encouraged.

'Railways have elevated and softened the lot of man,' said Theodora, 'and Colonel Campian views them with almost a religious sentiment. But I cannot read on a railroad, and the human voice is distressing to me amid the whirl and the whistling, and the wild panting of the loosened megatheria who drag us. And then those terrible grottoes; it is quite a descent of Proserpine; so I have no resource but my own thoughts.'

'And surely that is sufficient,' murmured Lothair.

'Not when the past is expelled,' said the lady.

'But the future?' said Lothair.

'Yes, that is ever interesting, but so vague that it sometimes induces slumber.'

The bell sounded, Lothair handed the lady to her compartment.

'Our Oxford visit,' she said, 'has been a great success and mainly through you.'

The Colonel was profuse in his cordial farewells, and it seemed they would never have ended had not the train moved.

Lothair remained upon the platform until it was out of sight, and then exclaimed, 'Is it a dream, or shall I ever see her again?'

CHAPTER XXVII.

A New Aspect of Life.

LOTHAIR reached London late in the afternoon. Among the notes and cards and letters on his table was a long and pressing despatch from Mr. Putney Giles awaiting his judgment and decision on many points.

'The central inauguration, if I may use the term,' said Mr. Putney Giles, 'is comparatively easy. It is an affair of expense and of labour, great labour; I may say unremitting labour. But your lordship will observe the other points are not mere points of expense and labour. We have to consult the feelings of several counties where your lordship cannot be present, at least certainly not on this occasion, and yet where an adequate recognition of those sentiments which ought to exist between the proprietor and all classes connected with him ought to be secured. Then Scotland: Scotland is a very difficult business to manage. It is astonishing how the sentiment lingers in that country connected with its old independence. I really am quite surprised at it. One of your lordship's most important tenants wrote me only a few days

back, that great dissatisfaction would prevail among your lordship's friends and tenantry in Scotland, if that country on this occasion were placed on the same level as a mere English county. It must be recognised as a kingdom. I almost think it would be better if we could persuade Lord Culloden not to attend the English inauguration, but remain in the kingdom of Scotland, and take the chair and the lead throughout the festal ceremonies. A peer of the realm, and your lordship's guardian, would impart something of a national character to the proceedings, and this, with a judicious emblazoning on some of the banners of the royal arms of Scotland, might have a conciliatory effect. One should always conciliate. But your lordship on all these points, and especially with reference to Lord Culloden, must be a much better judge than I am.'

Lothair nearly gave a groan. 'I almost wish,' he thought, 'my minority would never end. I am quite satisfied with things as they are. What is the kingdom of Scotland to me, and all these counties? I almost begin to feel that satiety which she said was inseparable from vast possessions.'

A letter from Bertram reminding him that he had not dined at White's as he had promised, and suggesting some new arrangement, and another from Monsignore Catesby earnestly urging him to attend a most peculiar and solemn function of the Church next Sunday evening, where the Cardinal would officiate and preach, and in which Lady St. Jerome and Miss Arundel were particularly interested, did not restore his equanimity.

A dinner at White's! He did not think he could stand a dinner at White's. Indeed he was not sure

that he could stand any dinner anywhere, especially in this hot weather. There was a good deal in what she said: 'One ought to eat alone.'

The ecclesiastical function was a graver matter. It had been long contemplated, often talked about, and on occasions looked forward to by him even with a certain degree of eagerness. He wished he had had an opportunity of speaking with her on these matters. She was eminently religious: that she had voluntarily avowed. And he felt persuaded that no light or thoughtless remark could fall from those lips. He wondered to what Church she belonged? Protestant or Papal? Her husband, being an American, was probably a Protestant, but he was a gentleman of the South and with nothing puritanical about him. She was a European, and probably of a Latin race. In all likelihood she was a Roman Catholic.

It was Wednesday evening, and his valet reminded him that he was engaged to dine with Lord and Lady Montairy.

Lothair sighed. He was so absorbed by his new feelings that he shrunk from society with a certain degree of aversion. He felt it quite out of his power to fulfil his engagement. He sent an excuse. It was Lothair's first excuse. In short, he 'threw over' the Montairys, to whom he was so much attached, whom he so much admired, and whose society he had hitherto so highly prized.

To 'throw over' a host is the most heinous of social crimes. It ought never to be pardoned. It disjoints a party, often defeats the combinations which might affect the results of a season, and generally renders the society incoherent and unsatisfactory. If the outrage could ever be condoned it might

be in the instance of a young man very inexperienced, the victim of some unexpected condition of nervous feelings over which the defaulter has really no control.

It was evening, and the restless Lothair walked forth without a purpose, and in a direction which he rarely visited. 'It is a wonderful place,' said he, 'this London; a nation, not a city; with a population greater than some kingdoms, and districts as different as if they were under different governments and spoke different languages. And what do I know of it? I have been living here six months, and my life has been passed in a park, two or three squares, and half a dozen streets!'

So he walked on and soon crossed Oxford Street, like the Rhine a natural boundary, and then got into Portland Place, and then found himself in the New Road, and then he hailed a cruising hansom, which he had previously observed was well-horsed.

''Tis the gondola of London,' said Lothair as he sprang in.

'Drive on till I tell you to stop.'

And the hansom drove on, through endless boulevards, some bustling, some dingy, some tawdry and flaring, some melancholy and mean; rows of garden gods, planted on the walls of yards full of vases and divinities of concrete, huge railway halls, monster hotels, dissenting chapels in the form of Gothic churches, quaint ancient almshouses that were once built in the fields, and tea-gardens and stingo houses and knackers' yards. They were in a district far beyond the experience of Lothair, which indeed had been exhausted when he had passed Eustonia, and from that he had been long separated. The way was

broad but ill-lit, with houses of irregular size but generally of low elevation, and sometimes detached in smoked-dried gardens. The road was becoming a bridge which crossed a canal, with barges and wharves and timber yards, when their progress was arrested by a crowd. It seemed a sort of procession; there was a banner, and the lamp-light fell upon a religious emblem. Lothair was interested, and desired the driver not to endeavour to advance. The procession was crossing the road and entering a building.

'It's a Roman Catholic chapel,' said a bystander in answer to Lothair. 'I believe it is a meeting about one of their schools. They always have banners.'

'I think I will get out,' said Lothair to his driver. 'This, I suppose, will pay your fare.'

The man stared with delight at the sovereign in his palm, and in gratitude suggested that he should remain and wait for the gentleman, but the restless Lothair declined the proposal.

'Sir, sir,' said the man, leaning down his head as low as possible from his elevated seat, and speaking in a hushed voice, 'you are a real gentleman. Do you know what all this is?'

'Yes, yes; some meeting about a Roman Catholic school.'

The man shook his head. 'You are a real gentleman, and I will tell you the truth. They meet about the schools of the order of St. Joseph, over the left. It is a Fenian meeting.'

'A Fenian meeting!'

'Ay, ay, and you cannot enter that place without a ticket. Just you try! However, if a gentleman like you wants to go, you shall have my ticket,' said

the cabdriver; 'and here it is. And may I drive to-morrow as true a gentleman as I have driven to-day.'

So saying he took a packet from his breast pocket, and opening it offered to Lothair a green slip of paper which was willingly accepted. 'I should like above all things to go,' he said, and he blended with the rear of those who were entering the building. The collector of the tickets stared at Lothair and scrutinised his pass, but all was in order, and Lothair was admitted.

He passed through a house and a yard, at the bottom of which was a rather spacious building. When he entered it, he saw in an instant it was not a chapel. It was what is called a temperance hall, a room to be hired for public assemblies, with a raised platform at the end, on which were half a dozen men. The hall was tolerably full, and Lothair came in among the last. There were some children sitting on a form placed against the wall of the room, each with a bun which kept them quiet; the banner belonged to this school, and was the banner of St. Joseph.

A man dressed like a priest, and known as Father O'Molloy, came forward. He was received with signs of much sympathy, succeeded by complete silence. He addressed them in a popular and animated style on the advantages of education. They knew what that was, and then they cheered. Education taught them to know their rights. But what was the use of knowing their rights unless they enforced them? That was not to be done by prayer-books but by something else, and something else wanted a subscription.

This was the object of the meeting and the burthen of all the speeches which followed, and which were progressively more outspoken than the adroit introductory discourse. The Saxon was denounced, sometimes with coarseness, but sometimes in terms of picturesque passion; the vast and extending organisation of the brotherhood was enlarged on, the great results at hand intimated; the necessity of immediate exertion on the part of every individual pressed with emphasis. All these views and remarks received from the audience an encouraging response; and when Lothair observed men going round with boxes, and heard the clink of coin, he felt very embarrassed as to what he should do when asked to contribute to a fund raised to stimulate and support rebellion against his Sovereign. He regretted the rash restlessness which had involved him in such a position.

The collectors approached Lothair, who was standing at the end of the room opposite to the platform, where the space was not crowded.

'I should like to speak to Father O'Molloy,' said Lothair; 'he is a priest and will understand my views.'

'He is a priest here,' said one of the collectors with a sardonic laugh, 'but I am glad to say you will not find his name in the directory. Father O'Molloy is on the platform and engaged.'

'If you want to speak to the Father, speak from where you are,' said the other collector. 'Here, silence! a gentleman wants to address the meeting.'

And there was silence, and Lothair felt extremely embarrassed, but he was not wanting, though it was the first time in his life that he had addressed a public meeting.

'Gentlemen,' said Lothair, 'I really had no wish to intrude upon you; all I desired was to speak to Father O'Molloy. I wished to tell him that it would have given me pleasure to subscribe to these schools. I am not a Roman Catholic, but I respect the Roman Catholic religion. But I can do nothing that will imply the slightest sanction of the opinions I have heard expressed this evening. For your own sakes——' but here a yell arose which for ever drowned his voice.

'A spy, a spy!' was the general exclamation. 'We are betrayed! Seize him! Knock him over!' and the whole meeting seemed to have turned their backs on the platform and to be advancing on the unfortunate Lothair. Two of the leaders on the platform at the same time leapt down from it, to direct, as it were, the enraged populace.

But at this moment a man who had been in the lower part of the hall, in the vicinity of Lothair and standing alone, pushed forward, and by his gestures and general mien arrested somewhat the crowd, so that the two leaders who leapt from the platform and bustled through the crowd came in contact with him.

The stranger was evidently not of the class or country of the rest assembled. He had a military appearance, and spoke with a foreign accent when he said, 'This is no spy. Keep your people off.'

'And who are you?' enquired the leader thus addressed.

'One accustomed to be obeyed,' said the stranger.

'You may be a spy yourself,' said the leader.

'I will not undertake to say that there are no spies in this room,' said the stranger, 'but this person is not one, and anybody who touches this person will

touch this person at his peril. Stand off, men!' And they stood off. The wave retreated backward, leaving the two leaders in front. Nearly two hundred men, a moment before apparently full of furious passion and ready to take refuge in the violence of fear, were cowed by a single human being.

'Why, you are not afraid of one man?' said the leaders, ashamed of their following. 'Whatever betides, no one unknown shall leave this room, or it will be Bow Street to-morrow morning.'

'Nevertheless,' said the stranger, 'two unknown men will leave this room, and with general assent. If anyone touches this person or myself I will shoot him dead,' and he drew out his revolver; 'and as for the rest, look at that,' he added, giving a paper to the leader of the Fenian Lodge, 'and then give it me back again.'

The leader of the Fenian Lodge glanced at the paper; he grew pale, then scarlet, folded the paper with great care and returned it reverentially to the stranger, then looking round to the assembly and waving his hand he said, 'All right, the gentlemen are to go.'

'Well, you have got out of a scrape, young sir,' said the stranger to Lothair when they had escaped from the hall.

'And how can I express my gratitude to you?' Lothair replied.

'Poh!' said the stranger, 'a mere affair of common duty. But what surprises me is how you got your pass ticket.'

Lothair told him all.

'They manage their affairs in general wonderfully close,' said the stranger, 'but I have no opinion of

them. I have just returned from Ireland, where I thought I would go and see what they really are after. No real business in them. Their treason is a fairy tale, and their sedition a child talking in its sleep.'

They walked together about half a mile, and then the stranger said, 'At the end of this we shall get into the City Road, and the land again of omnibus and public conveyances, and I shall wish you good-night.'

'But it is distressing to me to part thus,' said Lothair. 'Pray let me call and pay my respects to my benefactor.'

'No claim to any such title,' said the stranger; 'I am always glad to be of use. I will not trouble you to call on me, for, frankly, I have no wish to increase the circle of my acquaintance. So, good-night; and as you seem to be fond of a little life, take my advice and never go about unarmed.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Castle in the Air.

HE Fenian adventure furnished the distraction which Lothair required. It broke that absorbing spell of sentiment which is the delicious but enervating privilege of the youthful heart; yet when Lothair woke in the morning from his well-earned slumbers, the charm returned, and he fell at once into a reverie of Belmont, and a speculation when he might really pay his first visit there. Not to-day, that was clearly out of the question. They had separated only yesterday, and yet it seemed an age, and the adventure of another world. There are moods of feeling which defy alike time and space.

But on the morrow, Friday, he might venture to go. But then, would to-morrow ever come? It seemed impossible. How were the intervening hours to pass? The world, however, was not so void of resources as himself, and had already appropriated his whole day. And, first, Monsignore Catesby came to breakfast with him, talking of everything that was agreeable or interesting, but in reality bent on securing his presence at the impending ecclesiastical ceremony of high im-

port, where his guardian was to officiate, and where the foundation was to be laid of the reconciliation of all Churches in the bosom of the true one. Then in the afternoon Lothair had been long engaged to a match of pigeon-shooting, in which pastime Bertram excelled. It seemed there was to be a most exciting sweepstakes to-day, in which the flower of England were to compete; Lothair among them, and for the first time.

This great exploit of arms was to be accomplished at the Castle in the Air, a fantastic villa near the banks of the Thames, belonging to the Duke of Brecon. His Grace had been offended by the conduct or the comments of the outer world, which in his pastime had thwarted or displeased him in the free life of Battersea. The Duke of Brecon was a gentleman easily offended, but not one of those who ever confined their sense of injury to mere words. He prided himself on 'putting down' any individual or body of men who chose to come into collision with him. And so in the present instance he formed a club of pigeon-shooters, and lent them his villa for their rendezvous and enjoyment. The society was exquisite, exclusive, and greatly sought after. And the fine ladies, tempted of course by the beauty of the scene, honoured and inspired the competing confederates by their presence.

The Castle in the Air was a colossal thatched cottage, built by a favourite of King George the Fourth. It was full of mandarins and pagodas and green dragons, and papered with birds of many colours and with vast tails. The gardens were pretty, and the grounds park-like, with some noble cedars and some huge walnut trees.

The Duke of Brecon was rather below the middle size, but he had a singularly athletic frame not devoid of symmetry. His head was well placed on his broad shoulders, and his mien was commanding. He was narrow-minded and prejudiced, but acute, and endowed with an unbending will. He was an eminent sportsman, and brave even to brutality. His boast was that he had succeeded in everything he had attempted, and he would not admit the possibility of future failure. Though still a very young man he had won the Derby, training his own horse; and he successfully managed a fine stud in defiance of the ring, whom it was one of the secret objects of his life to extirpate. Though his manner to men was peremptory, cold, and hard, he might be described as popular, for there existed a superstitious belief in his judgment, and it was known that in some instances when he had been consulted he had given more than advice. It could not be said that he was beloved, but he was feared and highly considered. Parasites were necessary to him, though he despised them.

The Duke of Brecon was an avowed admirer of Lady Corisande, and was intimate with her family. The Duchess liked him much, and was often seen at ball or assembly on his arm. He had such excellent principles, she said; was so straightforward, so true and firm. It was whispered that even Lady Corisande had remarked that the Duke of Brecon was the only young man of the time who had 'character.' The truth is the Duke, though absolute and hard to men, could be soft and deferential to women, and such an exception to a general disposition has a charm. It was said also that he had, when requisite, a bewitching smile.

If there were any thing or any person in the world that St. Aldegonde hated more than another it was the Duke of Brecon. Why St. Aldegonde hated him was not very clear, for they had never crossed each other, nor were the reasons for his detestation, which he occasionally gave, entirely satisfactory: sometimes it was because the Duke drove piebalds; sometimes because he had a large sum in the Funds, which St. Aldegonde thought disgraceful for a Duke; sometimes because he wore a particular hat, though, with respect to this last allegation, it does not follow that St. Aldegonde was justified in his criticism, for in such matters St. Aldegonde was himself very deficient, and had once strolled up St. James's Street with his dishevelled locks crowned with a wide-awake. Whatever might be the cause, St. Aldegonde generally wound up, 'I tell you what, Bertha, if Corisande marries that fellow I have made up my mind to go to the Indian Ocean. It is a country I never have seen, and Pinto tells me you cannot do it well under five years.'

'I hope you will take me, Granville, with you,' said Lady St. Aldegonde, 'because it is highly probable Corisande will marry the Duke; mamma, you know, likes him so much.'

'Why cannot Corisande marry Carisbrooke,' said St. Aldegonde, pouting; 'he is a really good fellow, much better looking, and so far as land is concerned, which after all is the only thing, has as large an estate as the Duke.'

'Well, these things depend a little upon taste,' said Lady St. Aldegonde.

'No, no,' said St. Aldegonde; 'Corisande must marry Carisbrooke. Your father would not like my

going to the Indian Archipelago and not returning for five years, perhaps never returning. Why should Corisande break up our society? Why are people so selfish? I never could go to Brentham again if the Duke of Brecon is always to be there, giving his opinion, and being what your mother calls "straightforward." I hate a straightforward fellow. As Pinto says, if every man were straightforward in his opinions, there would be no conversation. The fun of talk is to find out what a man really thinks, and then contrast it with the enormous lies he has been telling all dinner, and, perhaps, all his life.'

It was a favourable day for the Castle in the Air; enough but not too much sun, and a gentle breeze. Some pretty feet, not alone, were sauntering in the gardens, some pretty lips lingered in the rooms sipping tea; but the mass of the fair visitors, marvellously attired, were assembled at the scene of action, seated on chairs and in groups, which assumed something of the form of an amphitheatre. There were many gentlemen in attendance on them, or independent spectators of the sport. The field was large, not less than forty competitors, and comprising many of the best shots in England. The struggle, therefore, was long and ably maintained; but, as the end approached, it was evident that the contest would be between Bertram, Lothair, and the Duke of Brecon.

Lady St. Aldegonde and Lady Montairy were there, and their unmarried sister. The married sisters were highly excited in favour of their brother, but Lady Corisande said nothing. At last Bertram missed a bird, or rather his bird, which he had hit, escaped, and fell beyond the enclosure. Lothair was more successful, and it seemed that it might be a tie be-

tween him and the Duke. His Grace, when called, advanced with confident composure, and apparently killed both his birds, when, at this moment, a dog rushed forward and chased one of the mortally struck pigeons. The blue-rock, which was content to die by the hand of a Duke, would not deign to be worried by a dog, and it frantically moved its expiring wings, scaled the paling, and died. So Lothair won the prize.

'Well,' said Lady Montairy to Lothair, 'as Bertram was not to win I am glad it was you.'

'And you will not congratulate me?' said Lothair to Lady Corisande.

She rather shook her head. 'A tournament of doves,' she said. 'I would rather see you all in the lists of Ashby.'

Lothair had to dine this day with one of the vanquished. This was Mr. Brancepeth, celebrated for his dinners, still more for his guests. Mr. Brancepeth was a grave young man. It was supposed that he was always meditating over the arrangement of his menus, or the skilful means by which he could assemble together the right persons to partake of them. Mr. Brancepeth had attained the highest celebrity in his peculiar career. To dine with Mr. Brancepeth was a social incident that was mentioned. Royalty had consecrated his banquets, and a youth of note was scarcely a graduate of society who had not been his guest. There was one person, however, who, in this respect, had not taken his degree, and, as always happens under such circumstances, he was the individual on whom Mr. Brancepeth was most desirous to confer it; and this was St. Aldegonde. In vain Mr. Brancepeth had approached him with vast cards

of invitation to hecatombs, and with insinuating little notes to dinners *sans façon;* proposals which the presence of princes might almost construe into a command, or the presence of some one even more attractive than princes must invest with irresistible charm. It was all in vain. 'Not that I dislike Brancepeth,' said St. Aldegonde; 'I rather like him: I like a man who can do only one thing, but does that well. But then I hate dinners.'

But the determined and the persevering need never despair of gaining their object in this world. And this very day, riding home from the Castle in the Air, Mr. Brancepeth overtook St. Aldegonde, who was lounging about on a rough Scandinavian cob, as dishevelled as himself, listless and groomless. After riding together for twenty minutes, St. Aldegonde informed Mr. Brancepeth, as was his general custom with his companions, that he was bored to very extinction, and that he did not know what he should do with himself for the rest of the day. 'If I could only get Pinto to go with me, I think I would run down to the Star and Garter or perhaps to Hampton Court.'

'You will not be able to get Pinto to-day,' said Mr. Brancepeth, 'for he dines with me.'

'What an unlucky fellow I am!' exclaimed St. Aldegonde, entirely to himself. 'I had made up my mind to dine with Pinto to-day.'

'And why should you not? Why not meet Pinto at my house?'

'Well, that is not in my way,' said St. Aldegonde, but not in a decided tone. 'You know I do not like strangers, and crowds of wine-glasses, and what is called all the delicacies of the season.'

'You will meet no one that you do not know and like. It is a little dinner I made for——' and he mentioned Lothair.

'I like Lothair,' said St. Aldegonde, dreamily. 'He is a nice boy.'

'Well you will have him and Pinto to yourself.'

The large fish languidly rose and swallowed the bait, and the exulting Mr. Brancepeth cantered off to Hill Street to give the necessary instructions.

Mr. Pinto was one of the marvels of English society; the most sought after of all its members, though no one could tell you exactly why. He was a little oily Portuguese, middle-aged, corpulent, and somewhat bald, with dark eyes of sympathy, not unmixed with humour. No one knew who he was, and in a country the most scrutinising as to personal details, no one enquired or cared to know. A quarter of a century ago an English noble had caught him in his travels, and brought him young to England, where he had always remained. From the favourite of an individual he had become the oracle of a circle, and then the idol of society. All this time his manner remained unchanged. He was never at any time either humble or pretentious. Instead of being a parasite, everybody flattered him; and instead of being a hanger-on of society, society hung on Pinto.

It must have been the combination of many pleasing qualities, rather than the possession of any commanding one, that created his influence. He certainly was not a wit, yet he was always gay, and always said things that made other people merry. His conversation was sparkling, interesting, and fluent, yet it was observed he never gave an opinion on any subject and never told an anecdote. Indeed, he would some-

times remark, when a man fell into his anecdotage it was a sign for him to retire from the world. And yet Pinto rarely opened his mouth without everybody being stricken with mirth. He had the art of viewing common things in a fanciful light, and the rare gift of raillery which flattered the self-love of those whom it seemed sportively not to spare. Sometimes those who had passed a fascinating evening with Pinto would try to remember on the morrow what he had said, and could recall nothing. He was not an intellectual Crœsus, but his pockets were full of sixpences.

One of his ingredients of his social spell was no doubt his manner, which was tranquil even when he was droll. He never laughed except with his eyes, and delivered himself of his most eccentric fancies in an unctuous style. He had a rare gift of mimicry, which he used with extreme reserve, and therefore was proportionately effective when displayed. Add to all this, a sweet voice, a soft hand, and a disposition both soft and sweet, like his own Azores. It was understood that Pinto was easy in his circumstances, though no one knew where these circumstances were. His equipage was worthy of his position, and in his little house in May Fair he sometimes gave a dinner to a fine lady, who was as proud of the event as the Queen of Sheba of her visit to Solomon the Great.

When St. Aldegonde arrived in Hill Street, and slouched into the saloon with as uncouth and graceless a general mien as a handsome and naturally graceful man could contrive to present, his keen though listless glance at once revealed to him that he was, as he described it at dinner to Hugo Bohun, in a social jungle, in which there was a great herd of animals that he particularly disliked, namely, what he

entitled 'swells.' The scowl on his distressed countenance at first intimated a retreat; but after a survey, courteous to his host and speaking kindly to Lothair as he passed on, he made a rush to Mr. Pinto, and, cordially embracing him, said, 'Mind we sit together.'

The dinner was not a failure, though an exception to the polished ceremony of the normal Brancepeth banquet. The host headed his table, with the Duke of Brecon on his right and Lothair on his left hand, and 'swells' of calibre in their vicinity; but St. Aldegonde sat far away, next to Mr. Pinto, and Hugo Bohun on the other side of that gentleman. Hugo Bohun loved 'swells,' but he loved St. Aldegonde more. The general conversation in the neighbourhood of Mr. Brancepeth did not flag: they talked of the sport of the morning, and then, by association of ideas, of every other sport. And then from the sports of England they ranged to the sports of every other country. There were several there who had caught salmon in Norway and killed tigers in Bengal, and visited those countries only for that purpose. And then they talked of horses, and then they talked of women.

Lothair was rather silent; for in this society of ancients, the youngest of whom was perhaps not less than five-and-twenty, and some with nearly a lustre added to that mature period, he felt the awkward modesty of a freshman. The Duke of Brecon talked much, but never at length. He decided everything, at least to his own satisfaction; and if his opinion were challenged, remained unshaken, and did not conceal it.

All this time a different scene was enacting at the other end of the table. St. Aldegonde, with his back

turned to his other neighbour, hung upon the accents of Mr. Pinto, and Hugo Bohun imitated St. Aldegonde. What Mr. Pinto said or was saying was quite inaudible, for he always spoke low, and in the present case he was invisible, like an ortolan smothered in vine-leaves; but every now and then St. Aldegonde broke into a frightful shout, and Hugo Bohun tittered immensely. Then St. Aldegonde, throwing himself back in his chair, and talking to himself or the ceiling, would exclaim, 'Best thing I ever heard,' while Hugo nodded sympathy with a beaming smile.

The 'swells' now and then paused in their conversation and glanced at the scene of disturbance.

'They seem highly amused there,' said Mr. Brancepeth. 'I wish they would pass it on.'

'I think St. Aldegonde,' said the Duke of Brecon, 'is the least conventional man of my acquaintance.'

Notwithstanding this stern sneer, a practised general like Mr. Brancepeth felt he had won the day. All his guests would disperse and tell the world that they had dined with him and met St. Aldegonde, and to-morrow there would be a blazoned paragraph in the journals commemorating the event, and written as if by a herald. What did a little disturb his hospitable mind was that St. Aldegonde literally tasted nothing. He did not care so much for his occasionally leaning on the table with both his elbows, but that he should pass by every dish was distressing. So Mr. Brancepeth whispered to his own valet—a fine gentleman, who stood by his master's chair and attended on no one else except, when requisite, his master's immediate neighbour—and desired him to suggest to St. Aldegonde whether the side table might not provide, under the difficulties, some sus-

tenance. St. Aldegonde seemed quite gratified by the attention, and said he should like to have some cold meat. Now that was the only thing the side table, bounteous as was its disposition, could not provide. All the joints of the season were named in vain, and pies and preparations of many climes. But nothing would satisfy St. Aldegonde but cold meat.

'Well, now I shall begin my dinner,' he said to Pinto, when he was at length served. 'What surprises me most in you is your English. There is not a man who speaks such good English as you do.'

'English is an expressive language,' said Mr. Pinto, 'but not difficult to master. Its range is limited. It consists, as far as I can observe, of four words: "nice," "jolly," "charming," and "bore;" and some grammarians add "fond."'

When the guests rose and returned to the saloon, St. Aldegonde was in high spirits, and talked to every one, even to the Duke of Brecon, whom he considerately reminded of his defeat in the morning, adding that from what he had seen of his Grace's guns he had no opinion of them, and that he did not believe that breech-loaders suited pigeon-shooting.

Finally, when he bade farewell to his host, St. Aldegonde assured him that he never in his life made so good a dinner, and that Pinto had never been so rich.

When the party broke up, the majority of the guests went, sooner or later, to a ball that was given this evening by Lady St. Jerome. Others, who never went to balls, looked forward with refined satisfaction to a night of unbroken tobacco. St. Aldegonde went to play whist at the house of a lady

who lived out of town. 'I like the drive home,' he said; 'the morning air is so refreshing when one has lost one's money.'

A ball at St. Jerome House was a rare event, but one highly appreciated. It was a grand mansion, with a real suite of state apartments, including a genuine ball-room in the Venetian style, and lighted with chandeliers of rock crystal. Lady St. Jerome was a woman of taste and splendour and romance, who could do justice to the scene and occasion. Even Lord St. Jerome, quiet as he seemed, in these matters was popular with young men. It was known that Lord St. Jerome gave at his ball suppers the same champagne that he gave at his dinners, and that was of the highest class: in short, a patriot. We talk with wondering execration of the great poisoners of past ages, the Borgias, the inventor of *aqua tofana,* and the amiable Marchioness de Brinvilliers; but Pinto was of opinion that there were more social poisoners about in the present day than in the darkest and the most demoralised periods, and then none of them are punished; "which is so strange," he would add, "as they are all found out."

Lady St. Jerome received Lothair, as Pinto said, with extreme unction. She looked in his eyes, she retained his hand, she said that what she had heard had made her so happy. And then, when he was retiring, she beckoned him back and said she must have some tea, and, taking his arm, they walked away together. 'I have so much to tell you,' she said, 'and everything is so interesting. I think we are on the eve of great events. The Monsignore told me your heart was with us. It must be. They are your own thoughts, your own wishes. We are

realising your own ideal. I think next Sunday will be remembered as a great day in English history; the commencement of a movement that may save everything. The Monsignore, I know, has told you all.'

Not exactly; the Oxford visit had deranged a little the plans of the Monsignore, but he had partially communicated the vast scheme. It seems there was a new society to be instituted for the restoration of Christendom. The change of name from Christendom to Europe had proved a failure and a disastrous one. 'And what wonder?' said Lady St. Jerome. 'Europe is not even a quarter of the globe, as the philosophers pretended it was. There is already a fifth division, and probably there will be many more as the philosophers announce it impossible.' The Cardinal was to inaugurate the institution on Sunday next at the Jesuits' Church by one of his celebrated sermons. It was to be a function of the highest class. All the faithful of consideration were to attend, but the attendance was not to be limited to the faithful. Every sincere adherent of Church principles who was in a state of prayer and preparation was solicited to be present and join in the holy and common work of restoring to the Divine Master his kingdom upon earth with its rightful name.

It was a brilliant ball. All the 'nice' people in London were there. All the young men who now will never go to balls were present. This was from respect to the high character of Lord St. Jerome. Clare Arundel looked divine, dressed in a wondrous white robe garlanded with violets, just arrived from Paris, a present from her god-mother the Duchess of Lorrain-Schulenbourg. On her head a violet wreath,

deep and radiant as her eyes, and which admirably contrasted with her golden-brown hair.

Lothair danced with her and never admired her more. Her manner towards him was changed. It was attractive, even alluring. She smiled on him, she addressed him in tones of sympathy, even of tenderness. She seemed interested in all he was doing, she flattered him by a mode which is said to be irresistible to a man, by talking of himself. When the dance had finished he offered to attend her to the tea-room. She accepted the invitation even with cordiality.

'I think I must have some tea,' she said, 'and I like to go with my kinsman.'

Just before supper was announced, Lady St. Jerome told Lothair, to his surprise, that he was to attend Miss Arundel to the great ceremony. 'It is Clare's ball,' said Lady St. Jerome, 'given in her honour, and you are to take care of her.'

'I am more than honoured,' said Lothair. 'But does Miss Arundel wish it? for, to tell you the truth, I thought I had rather abused her indulgence this evening.'

'Of course she wishes it,' said Lady St. Jerome. 'Who should lead her out on such an occasion, her own ball, than the nearest and dearest relation she has in the world except ourselves?'

Lothair made no reply to this unanswerable logic, but was as surprised as he was gratified. He recalled the hour when the kinship was at the best but coldly recognised, the inscrutable haughtiness, even distrust, with which Miss Arundel listened to the exposition of his views and feelings, and the contrast which her past mood presented to her present brilliant sympathy

and cordial greeting. But he yielded to the magic of the flowing hour. Miss Arundel seemed indeed quite a changed being to-night, full of vivacity, fancy, feeling, almost fun. She was witty and humorous and joyous and fascinating. As he fed her with cates as delicate as her lips, and manufactured for her dainty beverages which would not outrage their purity, Lothair at last could not refrain from intimating his sense of her unusual but charming joyousness.

'No,' she said, turning round with animation, 'my natural disposition, always repressed because I have felt overwhelmed by the desolation of the world. But now I have hope; I have more than hope, I have joy. I feel sure this idea of the restoration of Christendom comes from Heaven. It has restored me to myself, and has given me a sense of happiness in this life which I never could contemplate. But what is the climax of my joy is, that you, after all my own blood, and one in whose career I have ever felt the deepest interest, should be ordained to lay, as it were, the first stone of this temple of Divine love.'

It was break of day when Lothair jumped into his brougham. 'Thank heavens,' he exclaimed, 'it is at last Friday!'

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Charms of Belmont.

HERE is something very pleasant in a summer suburban ride in the valley of the Thames. London transforms itself into bustling Knightsbridge and airy Brompton brightly and gracefully lingers cheerfully in the long, miscellaneous, well-watered King's Road, and only says farewell when you come to an abounding river and a picturesque bridge. The boats were bright upon the waters when Lothair crossed it, and his dark chestnut barb, proud of its resplendent form, curvetted with joy when it reached a green common, studded occasionally with a group of pines and well-bedecked with gorse. After this he pursued the public road for a couple of miles until he observed on his left hand a gate on which was written 'Private Road,' and here he stopped. The gate was locked, but when Lothair assured the keeper that he was about to visit Belmont, he was permitted to enter.

He entered a green and winding lane, fringed with tall elms and dim with fragrant shade, and after proceeding about half a mile came to a long low-built

lodge with a thatched and shelving roof and surrounded by a rustic colonnade covered with honeysuckle. Passing through the gate at hand, he found himself in a road winding through gently undulating banks of exquisite turf studded with rare shrubs and occasionally rarer trees. Suddenly the confined scene expanded: wide lawns spread out before him, shadowed with the dark forms of many huge cedars and blazing with flower-beds of every hue. The house was also apparent, a stately mansion of hewn stone, with wings and a portico of Corinthian columns, and backed by deep woods.

This was Belmont, built by a favourite Minister of State to whom a grateful and gracious sovereign had granted a slice of a royal park whereon to raise a palace and a garden and find occasionally Tusculan repose.

The lady of the mansion was at home, and though Lothair was quite prepared for this, his heart beat. The inner hall was of noble proportion, and there were ranged in it many Roman busts and some ancient slabs and altars of marble. These had been collected some century ago by the Minister; but what immediately struck the eye of Lothair were two statues by an American artist, and both of fame, the Sibyl and the Cleopatra. He had heard of these, but had never seen them, and could not refrain from lingering a moment to gaze upon their mystical and fascinating beauty.

He proceeded through two spacious and lofty chambers, of which it was evident the furniture was new. It was luxurious and rich and full of taste, but there was no attempt to recall the past in the details: no cabinets and clocks of French kings or tables of

French queens, no chairs of Venetian senators, no candelabra that had illumined Doges of Genoa, no ancient porcelain of rare schools and ivory carvings and choice enamels. The walls were hung with masterpieces of modern art, chiefly of the French school, Ingres and Delaroche and Scheffer.

The last saloon led into a room of smaller dimensions opening on the garden, and which Lothair at first thought must be a fernery, it seemed so full of choice and expanding specimens of that beautiful and multiform plant; but when his eye had become a little accustomed to the scene and to the order of the groups, he perceived they were only the refreshing and profuse ornaments of a regularly furnished and inhabited apartment. There was a table covered with writing materials and books and some music. A chair before the table was so placed as if some one had only recently quitted it, a book being open but turned upon its face with an ivory cutter by its side. It would seem that the dweller in the chamber might not be far distant. The servant invited Lothair to be seated and saying that Mrs. Campian must be in the garden, proceeded to inform his mistress of the arrival of a guest.

The room opened on a terrace adorned with statues and orange trees, and descending gently into a garden in the Italian style, in the centre of which was a marble fountain of many figures. The grounds were not extensive, but they were only separated from the royal park by a wire fence, so that the scene seemed alike rich and illimitable. On the boundary was a summerhouse in the shape of a classic temple, one of those pavilions of pleasure which nobles loved to raise in the last century.

As Lothair beheld the scene with gratification, the servant reappeared on the steps of the terrace and invited him to descend. Guiding him through the garden, the servant retired as Lothair recognised Mrs. Campian approaching them.

She gave her hand to Lothair and welcomed him cordially but with serenity. They mutually exchanged hopes that their return to town had been agreeable. Lothair could not refrain from expressing how pleased he was with Belmont.

'I am glad you approve of our hired home,' said Theodora; 'I think we were fortunate in finding one that suits our tastes and habits. We love pictures and statues and trees and flowers, and yet we love our friends, and our friends are people who live in cities.'

'I think I saw two statues to-day of which I have often heard,' said Lothair.

'The Sibyl and Cleopatra? Yes, Colonel Campian is rather proud of possessing them. He collects only modern art, for which I believe there is a great future, though some of our friends think it is yet in its cradle.'

'I am very sorry to say,' said Lothair, 'that I know very little about art, or indeed anything else, but I admire what is beautiful. I know something about architecture, at least church architecture.'

'Well, religion has produced some of our finest buildings,' said Theodora; 'there is no question of that; and as long as they are adapted to what takes place in them they are admirable. The fault I find in modern churches in this country is, that there is little relation between the ceremonies and the structure. Nobody seems now conscious that every true archi-

tectural form has a purpose. But I think the climax of confused ideas is capped when dissenting chapels are built like cathedrals.'

'Ah! to build a cathedral,' exclaimed Lothair, 'that is a great enterprise. I wish I might show you some day some drawings I have of a projected cathedral.'

'A projected cathedral!' said Theodora. 'Well, I must confess to you I never could comprehend the idea of a Protestant cathedral.'

'But I am not quite sure,' said Lothair, blushing and agitated, 'that it will be a Protestant cathedral. I have not made up my mind about that.'

Theodora glanced at him, unobserved, with her wonderful grey eyes; a sort of supernatural light seemed to shoot from beneath their long dark lashes and read his inmost nature. They were all this time returning, as she had suggested, to the house. Rather suddenly she said, 'By-the-bye, as you are so fond of art, I ought to have asked you whether you would like to see a work by the sculptor of Cleopatra which arrived when we were at Oxford. We have placed it on a pedestal in the temple. It is the Genius of Freedom. I may say I was assisting at its inauguration when your name was announced to me.'

Lothair caught at this proposal, and they turned and approached the temple. Some workmen were leaving the building as they entered, and one or two lingered.

Upon a pedestal of porphyry rose the statue of a female in marble. Though veiled with drapery which might have become the Goddess of Modesty, admirable art permitted the contour of the perfect form to be traced. The feet were without sandals, and the undulating breadth of one shoulder, where the drapery

was festooned, remained uncovered. One expected with such a shape some divine visage. That was not wanting; but humanity was asserted in the transcendent brow, which beamed with sublime thought and profound enthusiasm.

Some would have sighed that such beings could only be pictured in a poet's or an artist's dream, but Lothair felt that what he beheld with rapture was no ideal creation, and that he was in the presence of the inspiring original.

'It is too like!' he murmured.

'It is the most successful recurrence to the true principles of art in modern sculpture,' said a gentleman on his right hand.

This person was a young man, though more than ten years older than Lothair. His appearance was striking. Above the middle height, his form, athletic though lithe and symmetrical, was crowned by a countenance aquiline but delicate, and from many circumstances of a remarkable radiancy. The lustre of his complexion, the fire of his eye, and his chestnut hair in profuse curls, contributed much to this dazzling effect. A thick but small moustache did not conceal his curved lip or the scornful pride of his distended nostril, and his beard, close but not long, did not veil the singular beauty of his mouth. It was an arrogant face, daring and vivacious, yet weighted with an expression of deep and haughty thought.

The costume of this gentleman was rich and picturesque. Such extravagance of form and colour is sometimes encountered in the adventurous toilette of a country house, but rarely experienced in what might still be looked upon as a morning visit in the metropolis.

'You know Mr. Phœbus?' asked a low clear voice, and turning round Lothair was presented to a person so famous that even Lothair had heard of him.

Mr. Phœbus was the most successful, not to say the most eminent, painter of the age. He was the descendant of a noble family of Gascony that had emigrated to England from France in the reign of Louis XIV. Unquestionably they had mixed their blood frequently during the interval and the vicissitudes of their various life; but in Gaston Phœbus Nature, as is sometimes her wont, had chosen to reproduce exactly the original type. He was the Gascon noble of the sixteenth century, with all his brilliancy, bravery, and boastfulness, equally vain, arrogant, and eccentric, accomplished in all the daring or the graceful pursuits of man, yet nursed in the philosophy of our times.

'It is presumption in my talking about such things,' said Lothair; 'but might I venture to ask what you may consider the true principles of art?'

'Aryan principles,' said Mr. Phœbus; 'not merely the study of nature, but of beautiful nature; the art of design in a country inhabited by a firstrate race, and where the laws, the manners, the customs, are calculated to maintain the health and beauty of a firstrate race. In a greater or less degree, these conditions obtained from the age of Pericles to the age of Hadrian in pure Aryan communities, but Semitism began then to prevail, and ultimately triumphed. Semitism has destroyed art; it taught man to despise his own body, and the essence of art is to honour the human frame.'

'I am afraid I ought not to talk about such things,'

said Lothair; 'but if by Semitism you mean religion, surely the Italian painters inspired by Semitism did something.'

'Great things,' said Mr. Phœbus; 'some of the greatest. Semitism gave them subjects, but the Renaissance gave them Aryan art, and it gave that art to a purely Aryan race. But Semitism rallied in the shape of the Reformation, and swept all away. When Leo the Tenth was Pope, popery was pagan; popery is now Christian and art is extinct.'

'I cannot enter into such controversies,' said Lothair. 'Every day I feel, more and more, I am extremely ignorant.'

'Do not regret it,' said Mr. Phœbus. 'What you call ignorance is your strength. By ignorance you mean a want of knowledge of books. Books are fatal; they are the curse of the human race. Nine-tenths of existing books are nonsense, and the clever books are the refutation of that nonsense. The greatest misfortune that ever befell man was the invention of printing. Printing has destroyed education. Art is a great thing, and science is a great thing; but all that art and science can reveal can be taught by man and by his attributes: his voice, his hand, his eye. The essence of education is the education of the body. Beauty and health are the chief sources of happiness. Men should live in the air; their exercises should be regular, varied, scientific. To render his body strong and supple is the first duty of man. He should develop and completely master the whole muscular system. What I admire in the order to which you belong is that they do live in the air, that they excel in athletic sports; that they can speak only one language; and that they never read. This is not a com-

plete education, but it is the highest education since the Greek.'

'What you say I feel encouraging,' said Lothair, repressing a smile, 'for I myself live very much in the air, and am fond of all sports; but I confess I am often ashamed of being so poor a linguist, and was seriously thinking that I ought to read.'

'No doubt every man should combine an intellectual with a physical training,' replied Mr. Phœbus; 'but the popular conception of the means is radically wrong. Youth should attend lectures on art and science by the most illustrious professors, and should converse together afterwards on what they have heard. They should learn to talk; it is a rare accomplishment, and extremely healthy. They should have music always at their meals. The theatre, entirely remodelled and reformed, and under a minister of state, should be an important element of education. I should not object to the recitation of lyric poetry. That is enough. I would not have a book in the house, or even see a newspaper.'

'These are Aryan principles?' said Lothair.

'They are,' said Mr. Phœbus; 'and of such principles, I believe, a great revival is at hand. We shall both live to see another Renaissance.'

'And our artist here,' said Lothair, pointing to the statue, 'you are of opinion that he is asserting these principles?'

'Yes; because he has produced the Aryan form by studying the Aryan form. Phidias never had a finer model, and he has not been unequal to it.'

'I fancied,' said Lothair in a lower and enquiring tone, though Mrs. Campian had some time before glided out of the pavilion and was giving directions

to the workmen, 'I fancied I had heard that Mrs. Campian was a Roman.'

'The Romans were Greeks,' said Mr. Phœbus, 'and in this instance the Phidian type came out. It has not been thrown away. I believe Theodora has inspired as many painters and sculptors as any Aryan goddess. I look upon her as such, for I know nothing more divine.'

'I fear the Phidian type is very rare,' said Lothair.

'In nature and in art there must always be surpassing instances,' said Mr. Phœbus. 'It is a law, and a wise one; but, depend upon it, so strong and perfect a type as the original Aryan must be yet abundant among the millions, and may be developed. But for this you want great changes in your laws. It is the first duty of a state to attend to the frame and health of the subject. The Spartans understood this. They permitted no marriage the probable consequences of which might be a feeble progeny; they even took measures to secure a vigorous one. The Romans doomed the deformed to immediate destruction. The union of the races concerns the welfare of the commonwealth much too nearly to be entrusted to individual arrangement. The fate of a nation will ultimately depend upon the strength and health of the population. Both France and England should look to this; they have cause. As for our mighty engines of war in the hands of a puny race, it will be the old story of the lower empire and the Greek fire. Laws should be passed to secure all this, and some day they will be. But nothing can be done until the Aryan races are extricated from Semitism.'

CHAPTER XXX.

Lothair Disappoints the Monsignore.

OTHAIR returned to town in a not altogether satisfactory state of mind. He was not serene or content. On the contrary, he was rather agitated and perplexed. He could not say he regretted his visit. He had seen her, and he had seen her to great advantage. He had seen much too that was pleasing, and had heard also many things that, if not pleasing, were certainly full of interest. And yet, when he cantered back over the common, the world somehow did not seem to him so bright and exhilarating as in the ambling morn. Was it because she was not alone? And yet why should he expect she should be alone? She had many friends, and she was as accessible to them as to himself. And yet a conversation with her, as in the gardens of Blenheim, would have been delightful, and he had rather counted on it. Nevertheless, it was a great thing to know men like Mr. Phœbus, and hear their views on the nature of things. Lothair was very young, and was more thoughtful than studious. His education hitherto had

been, according to Mr. Phœbus, on the right principle, and chiefly in the open air; but he was intelligent and susceptible, and in the atmosphere of Oxford, now stirred with many thoughts, he had imbibed some particles of knowledge respecting the primæval races which had permitted him to follow the conversation of Mr. Phœbus not absolutely in a state of hopeless perplexity. He determined to confer with Father Coleman on the Aryan race and the genius of Semitism. As he returned through the park, he observed the Duchess and Lady Corisande in their barouche, resting for a moment in the shade, with Lord Carisbrooke on one side and the Duke of Brecon on the other.

As he was dressing for dinner, constantly brooding on one thought, the cause of his feeling of disappointment occurred to him. He had hoped in this visit to have established some basis of intimacy, and to have ascertained his prospect and his means of occasionally seeing her. But he had done nothing of the kind. He could not well call again at Belmont under a week, but even then Mr. Phœbus or some one else might be there. The world seemed dark. He wished he had never gone to Oxford. However a man may plan his life he is the creature of circumstances. The unforeseen happens and upsets everything. We are mere puppets.

He sat next to an agreeable woman at dinner, who gave him an interesting account of a new singer she had heard the night before at the opera; a fair Scandinavian, fresh as a lily and sweet as a nightingale.

'I was resolved to go and hear her,' said the lady; 'my sister Feodore, at Paris, had written to me so much about her. Do you know, I have never been

to the opera for an age! That alone was quite a treat to me. I never go to the opera, nor to the play, nor to anything else. Society has become so large and so exacting, that I have found out one never gets any amusement.'

'Do you know, I never was at the opera,' said Lothair.

'I am not at all surprised; and when you go (which I suppose you will some day), what will most strike you is, that you will not see a single person you ever saw in your life.'

'Strange!'

'Yes; it shows what a mass of wealth and taste and refinement there is in this wonderful metropolis of ours, quite irrespective of the circles in which we move, and which we once thought entirely engrossed them.'

After the ladies had retired, Bertram, who dined at the same house, moved up to him; and Hugo Bohun came over and took the vacant seat on his other side.

'What have you been doing with yourself?' said Hugo. 'We have not seen you for a week.'

'I went down to Oxford about some horses,' said Lothair.

'Fancy going down to Oxford about some horses in the heart of the season,' said Hugo. 'I believe you are selling us, and that, as the *Scorpion* announces, you are going to be married.'

'To whom?' said Lothair.

'Ah! that is the point. It is a dark horse at present, and we want you to tell us.'

'Why do not you marry, Hugo?' said Bertram.

'I respect the institution,' said Hugo, 'which is admitting something in these days; and I have al-

ways thought that every woman should marry, and no man.'

'It makes a woman and it mars a man, you think?' said Lothair.

'But I do not exactly see how your view would work practically,' said Bertram.

'Well, my view is a social problem,' said Hugo, 'and social problems are the fashion at present. It would be solved through the exceptions, which prove the principle. In the first place, there are your swells who cannot avoid the halter: you are booked when you are born; and then there are moderate men like myself, who have their weak moments. I would not answer for myself if I could find an affectionate family with good shooting and firstrate claret.'

'There must be many families with such conditions,' said Lothair.

Hugo shook his head. 'You try. Sometimes the wine is good and the shooting bad; sometimes the reverse; sometimes both are excellent, but then the tempers and the manners are equally detestable.'

'I vote we three do something to-morrow,' said Bertram.

'What shall it be?' said Hugo.

'I vote we row down to Richmond at sunset and dine, and then drive our teams up by moonlight. What say you, Lothair?'

'I cannot, I am engaged. I am engaged to go to the opera.'

'Fancy going to the opera in this sweltering weather!' exclaimed Bertram.

'He must be going to be married,' said Hugo.

And yet on the following evening, though the weather was quite as sultry and he was not going to

be married, to the opera Lothair went. While the agreeable lady the day before was dilating at dinner on this once famous entertainment, Lothair remembered that a certain person went there every Saturday evening, and he resolved that he should at least have the satisfaction of seeing her.

It was altogether a new scene for Lothair, and being much affected by music he found the general influence so fascinating that some little time elapsed before he was sufficiently master of himself to recur to the principal purpose of his presence. His box was on the first tier, where he could observe very generally and yet himself be sufficiently screened. As an astronomer surveys the starry heavens until his searching sight reaches the desired planet, so Lothair's scrutinising vision wandered till his eye at length lighted on the wished-for orb. In the circle above his own, opposite to him but nearer the stage, he recognised the Campians. She had a star upon her forehead, as when he first met her some six months ago; it seemed an age.

Now what should he do? He was quite unlearned in the social habits of an opera-house. He was not aware that he had the privilege of paying the lady a visit in her box, and had he been so, he was really so shy in little things that he never could have summoned resolution to open the door of his own box and request an attendant to show him that of Mrs. Campian. He had contrived to get to the opera for the first time in his life, and the effort seemed to have exhausted his social enterprise. So he remained still, with his glass fixed very constantly on Mrs. Campian, and occasionally giving himself up to the scene. The performance did not sustain the first impression.

There were rival prima donnas, and they indulged in competitive screams: the choruses were coarse, and the orchestra much too noisy. But the audience were absorbed or enthusiastic. We may be a musical nation, but our taste would seem to require some refinement.

There was a stir in Mrs. Campian's box; a gentleman entered and seated himself. Lothair concluded he was an invited guest, and envied him. In about a quarter of an hour the gentleman bowed and retired, and another person came in, and one whom Lothair recognised as a young man who had been sitting during the first act in a stall beneath him. The system of paying visits at the opera then flashed upon his intelligence, as some discovery in science upon a painful observer. Why should he not pay a visit too? But how to do it? At last he was bold enough to open the door of his own box and go forth, but he could find no attendant, and some persons passing his open door, and nearly appropriating his lodge, in a fit of that nervous embarrassment which attends inexperience in little things, he secured his rights by returning baffled to his post.

There had been a change in Mrs. Campian's box in the interval. Colonel Campian had quitted it, and Mr. Phœbus occupied his place. Whether it were disappointment at his own failure or some other cause, Lothair felt annoyed. He was hot and cold by turns; felt awkward and blundering; fancied people were looking at him; that in some inexplicable sense he was ridiculous; wished he had never gone to the opera.

As time, and considerable time, elapsed, he became even miserable. Mr. Phœbus never moved, and

Mrs. Campian frequently conversed with him. More than one visitor had in the interval paid their respects to the lady, but Mr. Phœbus never moved. They did not stay, perhaps because Mr. Phœbus never moved.

Lothair never liked that fellow from the first. Sympathy and antipathy share our being as day and darkness share our lives. Lothair had felt an antipathy for Mr. Phœbus the moment he saw him. He had arrived at Belmont yesterday before Lothair, and he had outstayed him. These might be Aryan principles, but they were not the principles of good breeding.

Lothair determined to go home and never to come to the opera again. He opened the door of his box with firmness, and slammed it with courage; he had quite lost his shyness, and was indeed ready to run amuck with anyone who crossed him. The slamming of the door summoned a scudding attendant from a distant post, who with breathless devotion enquired whether Lothair wanted anything.

'Yes, I want you to show me the way to Mrs. Campian's box.'

'Tier above, No. 22,' said the boxkeeper.

'Ay, ay; but conduct me to it,' said Lothair, and he presented the man with an overpowering honorarium.

'Certainly, my lord,' said the attendant.

'He knows me,' thought Lothair; but it was not so. When the British nation is at once grateful and enthusiastic, they always call you 'my lord.'

But in his progress to 'No. 22, tier above,' all his valour evaporated, and when the box-door was opened he felt very much like a convict on the verge of execution; he changed colour, his legs tottered, his

heart beat, and he made his bow with a confused vision. The serenity of Theodora somewhat reassured him, and he seated himself, and even saluted Mr. Phœbus.

The conversation was vapid and conventional: remarks about the opera and its performers; even the heat of the weather was mentioned. Lothair had come, and he had nothing to say. Mrs. Campian seemed much interested in the performance; so, if he had anything to say, there was no opportunity of expressing it. She had not appeared to be so engrossed with the music before his arrival. In the meantime that Phœbus would not move; a quarter of an hour elapsed, and that Phœbus would not move. Lothair could not stand it any longer; he rose and bowed.

'Are you going?' said Theodora. 'Colonel Campian will be here in a moment; he will be quite grieved not to see you.'

But Lothair was inflexible. 'Perhaps,' she added, 'we may see you to-morrow night?'

'Never,' said Lothair to himself, as he clenched his teeth; 'my visit to Belmont was my first and my last. The dream is over.'

He hurried to a club in which he had been recently initiated, and of which the chief purpose is to prove to mankind that night to a wise man has its resources as well as gaudy day. Here striplings mature their minds in the mysteries of whist, and stimulate their intelligence by playing at stakes which would make their seniors look pale; here matches are made, and odds are settled, and the cares or enterprises of life are soothed or stimulated by fragrant cheroots or beakers of Badminton. Here, in the society of the listless and freakish St. Aldegonde, and Hugo Bohun,

and Bertram, and other congenial spirits, Lothair consigned to oblivion the rival churches of Christendom, the Aryan race, and the genius of Semitism.

It was an hour past dawn when he strolled home. London is often beautiful in summer at that hour, the architectural lines clear and defined in the smokeless atmosphere, and ever and anon a fragrant gale from gardened balconies wafted in the blue air. Nothing is stirring except wagons of strawberries and asparagus, and no one visible except a policeman or a Member of Parliament returning from a late division, where they have settled some great question that need never have been asked. Eve has its spell of calmness and consolation, but dawn brings hope and joy.

But not to Lothair; young, sanguine, and susceptible, he had, for a moment, yielded to the excitement of the recent scene, but with his senses stilled by the morning air, and free from the influence of Bertram's ready sympathy, and Hugo Bohun's gay comments on human life, and all the wild and amusing caprice, and daring wilfulness, and grand affectation that distinguish and inspire a circle of patrician youth, there came over him the consciousness that to him something dark had occurred, something bitter and disappointing and humiliating, and that the breaking morn would not bring to him a day so bright and hopeful as his former ones.

At first he fell into profound slumber: it was the inevitable result of the Badminton and the late hour. There was a certain degree of physical exhaustion which commanded repose. But the slumber was not long, and his first feeling, for it could not be called thought, was that some great misfortune had oc-

curred to him; and then the thought following the feeling brought up the form of the hated Phœbus. After that he had no real sleep, but a sort of occasional and feverish doze with intervals of infinite distress, waking always to a consciousness of inexpressible mortification and despair.

About one o'clock, relinquishing all hope of real and refreshing slumber, he rang his bell, and his valet appearing informed him that Father Coleman had called, and the Monsignore had called, and that now the Cardinal's secretary had just called, but the valet had announced that his lord was indisposed. There was also a letter from Lady St. Jerome. This news brought a new train of feeling. Lothair remembered that this was the day of the great ecclesiastical function, under the personal auspices of the Cardinal, at which indeed Lothair had never positively promised to assist, his presence at which he had sometimes thought they pressed unreasonably, not to say even indelicately, but at which he had perhaps led them, not without cause, to believe that he would be present. Of late the Monsignore had assumed that Lothair had promised to attend it.

Why should he not? The world was all vanity. Never did he feel more convinced than at this moment of the truth of his conclusion, that if religion were a real thing, man should live for it alone; but then came the question of the Churches. He could not bring himself without a pang to contemplate a secession from the Church of his fathers. He took refuge in the wild but beautiful thought of a reconciliation between Rome and England. If the consecration of the whole of his fortune to that end could assist in effecting the purpose, he would cheerfully make the

sacrifice. He would then go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and probably conclude his days in a hermitage on Mount Athos.

In the meantime he rose, and, invigorated by his bath, his thoughts became in a slight degree more mundane. They recurred to the events of the last few days of his life, but in a spirit of self-reproach and of conscious vanity and weakness. Why, he had not known her a week! This was Sunday morning, and last Sunday he had attended St. Mary's and offered up his earnest supplications for the unity of Christendom. That was then his sovereign hope and thought. Singular that a casual acquaintance with a stranger, a look, a glance, a word, a nothing, should have so disturbed his spirit and distracted his mind.

And yet——

And then he fell into an easy-chair, with a hair-brush in either hand, and conjured up in reverie all that had passed since that wondrous morn when he addressed her by the roadside, until the last dark hour when they parted, and for ever. There was not a word she had uttered to him, or to anyone else, that he did not recall; not a glance, not a gesture: her dress, her countenance, her voice, her hair. And what scenes had all this passed in! What refined and stately loveliness! Blenheim, and Oxford, and Belmont! They became her. Ah! why could not life consist of the perpetual society of such delightful people in such delightful places?

His valet entered and informed him that the Monsignore had returned, and would not be denied. Lothair roused himself from his delicious reverie, and his countenance became anxious and disquieted. He would have struggled against the intrusion, and was

murmuring resistance to his hopeless attendant, who shook his head, when the Monsignore glided into the room without permission, as the valet disappeared.

It was a wonderful performance: the Monsignore had at the same time to make a reconnaissance and to take up a position, to find out what Lothair intended to do, and yet to act and speak as if he was acquainted with those intentions, and was not only aware of, but approved them. He seemed hurried and yet tranquil, almost breathless with solicitude and yet conscious of some satisfactory consummation. His tones were at all times hushed, but to-day he spoke in a whisper, though a whisper of emphasis, and the dark eyes of his delicate aristocratic visage peered into Lothair, even when he was making a remark which seemed to require no scrutiny.

'It is one of the most important days for England that have happened in our time,' said the Monsignore. 'Lady St. Jerome thinks of nothing else. All our nobility will be there, the best blood in England, and some others who sympathise with the unity of the Church, the real question. Nothing has ever gratified the Cardinal more than your intended presence. He sent to you this morning. He would have called himself, but he has much to go through to-day. His Eminence said to me: "It is exactly what I want. Whatever may be our differences, and they are really slight, what I want is to show to the world that the sons of the Church will unite for the cause of Divine truth. It is the only course that can save society." When Lady St. Jerome told him that you were coming this evening, his Eminence was so affected that——'

'But I never said I was coming this evening,' said Lothair, rather dryly, and resolved to struggle, 'either to Lady St. Jerome or to anyone else. I said I would think of it.'

'But for a Christian to think of duty is to perform it,' said the Monsignore. 'To be ignorant of a duty is a sin, but to be aware of duty, and not to fulfil it, is heinous.'

'But is it a duty?' said Lothair, rather doggedly.

'What! to serve God and save society? Do you doubt it? Have you read the "Declaration of Geneva?" They have declared war against the Church, the State, and the domestic principle. All the great truths and laws on which the family reposes are denounced. Have you seen Garibaldi's letter? When it was read, and spoke of the religion of God being propagated throughout the world, there was a universal cry of "No, no! no religion!" But the religion of God was soon so explained as to allay all their fears. It is the religion of science. Instead of Adam, our ancestry is traced to the most grotesque of creatures; thought is phosphorus, the soul complex nerves, and our moral sense a secretion of sugar. Do you want these views in England? Rest assured they are coming. And how are we to contend against them? Only by Divine truth. And where is Divine truth? In the Church of Christ: in the gospel of order, peace, and purity.'

Lothair rose, and paced the room with his eyes on the ground.

'I wish I had been born in the middle ages,' he exclaimed, 'or on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or in some other planet: anywhere, or at any time, but in this country and in this age!'

'That thought is not worthy of you, my lord,' said Catesby. 'It is a great privilege to live in this country and in this age. It is a great privilege, in the mighty contest between the good and the evil principle, to combat for the righteous. They stand face to face now, as they have stood before. There is Christianity which, by revealing the truth, has limited the license of human reason; there is that human reason which resists revelation as a bondage, which insists upon being atheistical, or polytheistical, or pantheistical; which looks upon the requirements of obedience, justice, truth, and purity, as limitations of human freedom. It is to the Church that God has committed the custody and execution of His truth and law. The Church, as witness, teacher, and judge, contradicts and offends the spirit of license to the quick. This is why it is hated; this is why it is to be destroyed, and why they are preparing a future of rebellion, tyranny, falsehood, and degrading debauchery. The Church alone can save us, and you are asked to supplicate the Almighty to-night, under circumstances of deep hope, to favour the union of churchmen, and save the human race from the impending deluge.'

Lothair threw himself again into his seat and sighed. 'I am rather indisposed to-day, my dear Monsignore, which is unusual with me, and scarcely equal to such a theme, doubtless of the deepest interest to me and to all. I myself wish, as you well know, that all mankind were praying under the same roof. I shall continue in seclusion this morning. Perhaps you will permit me to think over what you have said with so much beauty and force.'

'I had forgotten that I had a letter to deliver to you,' said Catesby; and he drew from his breast-pocket a note which he handed to Lothair, who opened it quite unconscious of the piercing and even excited observation of his companion.

Lothair read the letter with a changing countenance, and then he read it again and blushed deeply. The letter was from Miss Arundel. After a slight pause, without looking up, he said, 'Nine o'clock is the hour, I believe.'

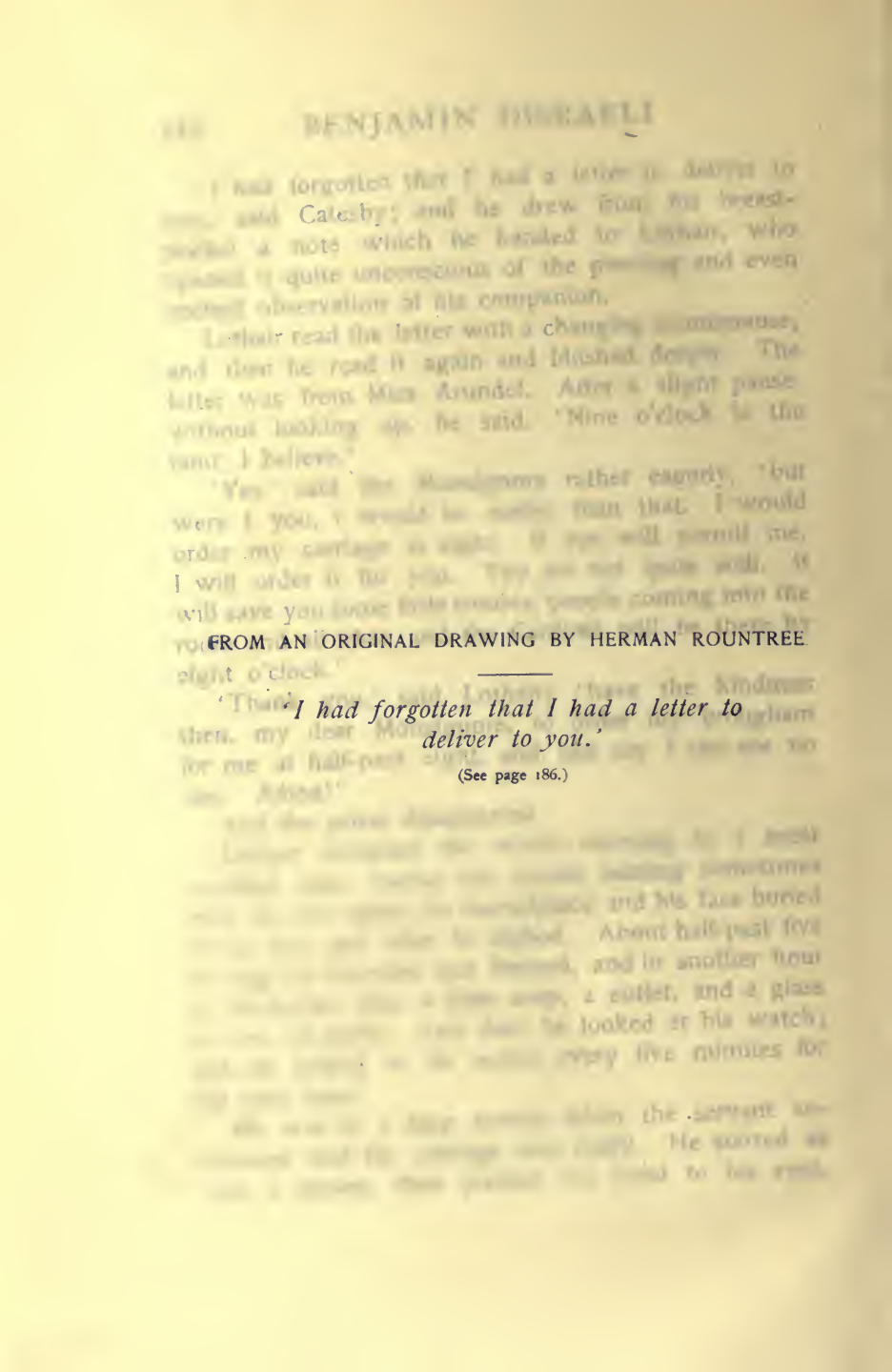
'Yes,' said the Monsignore rather eagerly, 'but were I you, I would be earlier than that. I would order my carriage at eight. If you will permit me, I will order it for you. You are not quite well. It will save you some little trouble, people coming into the room and all that, and the Cardinal will be there by eight o'clock.'

'Thank you,' said Lothair; 'have the kindness then, my dear Monsignore, to order my brougham for me at half-past eight, and just say I can see no one. Adieu!'

And the priest disappeared.

Lothair remained the whole morning in a most troubled state, pacing his rooms, leaning sometimes with his arm upon the mantelpiece and his face buried in his arm, and often he sighed. About half-past five he rang for his valet and dressed, and in another hour he broke his fast: a little soup, a cutlet, and a glass or two of claret. And then he looked at his watch; and he looked at his watch every five minutes for the next hour.

He was in a deep reverie when the servant announced that his carriage was ready. He started as from a dream, then pressed his hand to his eyes,



FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY HERMAN ROUNTREE

'I had forgotten that I had a letter to deliver to you.'

(See page 186.)

Copyright, 1904, by M. Walter Dunne

and kept it there for some moments, and then, exclaiming *'Jacta est alea,'* he descended the stairs.

'Where to, my lord?' enquired the servant when he had entered the carriage.

Lothair seemed to hesitate, and then he said, 'To Belmont.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

Theodora's Creed.

'BELMONT is the only house I know that is properly lighted,' said Mr. Phœbus, and he looked with complacent criticism round the brilliant saloons. 'I would not visit any one who had gas in his house; but even in palaces I find lamps; it is too dreadful. When they came here first there was an immense chandelier suspended in each of these rooms, pulling down the ceilings, dwarfing the apartments, leaving the guests all in darkness, and throwing all the light on the roof. The chandelier is the great abomination of furniture; it makes a noble apartment look small. And then they say you cannot light rooms without chandeliers! Look at these: need anything be more brilliant? And all the light in the right place: on those who are in the chamber. All light should come from the side of a room, and if you choose to have candelabra like these you can always secure sufficient.'

Theodora was seated on a sofa, in conversation with a lady of distinguished mien and with the countenance of a Roman empress. There were various

groups in the room, standing or seated. Colonel Campian was attending a lady to the piano where a celebrity presided, a gentleman with cropped head and a long black beard. The lady was of extraordinary beauty; one of those faces one encounters in Asia Minor, rich, glowing, with dark fringed eyes of tremulous lustre; a figure scarcely less striking, of voluptuous symmetry. Her toilette was exquisite, perhaps a little too splendid for the occasion, but abstractedly of fine taste, and she held, as she sang, a vast bouquet entirely of white stove flowers. The voice was as sweet as the stephanotis, and the execution faultless. It seemed the perfection of chamber-singing: no shrieks and no screams, none of those agonising experiments which result from the fatal competition of rival prima donnas.

She was singing when Lothair was ushered in. Theodora rose and greeted him with friendliness. Her glance was that of gratification at his arrival, but the performance prevented any conversation save a few kind remarks interchanged in a hushed tone. Colonel Campian came up: he seemed quite delighted at renewing his acquaintance with Lothair, and began to talk rather too loudly, which made some of the gentlemen near the piano turn round with glances of wondering reproach. This embarrassed his newly-arrived guest, who in his distress caught the bow of a lady who recognised him, and whom he instantly remembered as Mrs. Putney Giles. There was a vacant chair by her side, and he was glad to occupy it.

'Who is that lady?' enquired Lothair of his companion when the singing ceased.

'That is Madame Phœbus,' said Mrs. Giles.

'Madame Phœbus!' exclaimed Lothair, with an unconscious feeling of some relief. 'She is a very beautiful woman. Who was she?'

'She is a Cantacuzene, a daughter of the famous Greek merchant. The Cantacuzenes, you know, are great people, descendants of the Greek Emperors. Her uncle is prince of Samos. Mr. Cantacuzene was very much opposed to the match, but I think quite wrong. Mr. Phœbus is a most distinguished man, and the alliance is of the happiest. Never was such mutual devotion.'

'I am not surprised,' said Lothair, wonderfully relieved.

'Her sister Euphrosyne is in the room,' continued Mrs. Giles, 'the most extraordinary resemblance to her. There is just the difference between the matron and the maiden; that is all. They are nearly of the same age, and before the marriage might have been mistaken for each other. The most charming thing in the world is to hear the two sisters sing together. I hope they may to-night. I know the family very well. It was Mrs. Cantacuzene who introduced me to Theodora. You know it is quite *en règle* to call her Theodora. All the men call her Theodora; "the divine Theodora" is, I believe, the right thing.'

'And do you call her Theodora?' asked Lothair, rather dryly.

'Why, no,' said Mrs. Giles, a little confused, 'We are not intimate, at least not very. Mrs. Campian has been at my house, and I have been here two or three times; not so often as I could wish, for Mr. Giles, you see, does not like servants and horses to be used on Sundays, and no more do I, and on week

days he is too much engaged or too tired to come out this distance; so you see——'

The singing had ceased, and Theodora approached them. Addressing Lothair, she said, 'The Princess of Tivoli wishes that you should be presented to her.'

The Princess of Tivoli was a Roman dame of one of the most illustrious houses, but who now lived at Paris. She had in her time taken an active part in Italian politics, and had sacrificed to the cause to which she was devoted the larger part of a large fortune. What had been spared, however, permitted her to live in the French capital with elegance, if not with splendour; and her saloon was the gathering roof, in Paris, of almost everyone who was celebrated for genius or accomplishments. Though reputed to be haughty and capricious, she entertained for Theodora an even passionate friendship, and now visited England only to see her.

'Madame Campian has been telling me of all the kind things you did for her at Oxford,' said the Princess. 'Some day you must show me Oxford, but it must be next year. I very much admire the free University life. Tell me now, at Oxford you still have the Protestant religion?'

Lothair ventured to bow assent.

'Ah! that is well,' continued the Princess. 'I advise you to keep it. If we had only had the Protestant religion in Italy, things would have been very different. You are fortunate in this country in having the Protestant religion and a real nobility. Tell me now, in your constitution, if the father sits in the upper chamber, the son sits in the lower house; that I know: but is there any majorat attached to his seat?'

'Not at present.'

'You sit in the lower house, of course?'

'I am not old enough to sit in either house,' said Lothair, 'but when I am of age, which I shall be when I have the honour of showing Oxford to your Highness, I must sit in the upper house, for I have not the blessing of a living father.'

'Ah! that is a great thing in your country,' exclaimed the Princess, 'a man being his own master at so early an age.'

'I thought it was a "heritage of woe,"' said Lothair.

'No, no,' said the Princess; 'the only tolerable thing in life is action, and action is feeble without youth. What if you do not obtain your immediate object?—you always think you will, and the detail of the adventure is full of rapture. And thus it is the blunders of youth are preferable to the triumphs of manhood, or the successes of old age.'

'Well, it will be a consolation for me to remember this when I am in a scrape,' said Lothair.

'Oh! you have many, many scrapes awaiting you,' said the Princess. 'You may look forward to at least ten years of blunders: that is, illusions; that is, happiness. Fortunate young man!'

Theodora had, without appearing to intend it, relinquished her seat to Lothair, who continued his conversation with the Princess, whom he liked, but who, he was sorry to hear, was about to leave England, and immediately, that very night. 'Yes,' she said, 'it is my last act of devotion. You know in my country we have saints and shrines. All Italians, they say, are fond, are superstitious; my pilgrimage is to Theodora. I must come and worship her once a year.'

A gentleman bowed lowly to the Princess, who returned his salute with pleased alacrity. 'Do you know who that is?' said the Princess to Lothair. 'That is Baron Gozelius, one of our great reputations. He must have just arrived. I will present you to him: it is always agreeable to know a great man,' she added; 'at least Goethe says so!'

The philosopher, at her invitation, took a chair opposite the sofa. Though a profound man, he had all the vivacity and passion which are generally supposed to be peculiar to the superficial. He had remarkable conversational power, which he never spared. Lothair was captivated by his eloquence, his striking observations, his warmth, and the flashing of his southern eye.

'Baron Gozelius agrees with your celebrated pastor, Dr. Cumming,' said Theodora, with a tinge of demure sarcasm, 'and believes that the end of the world is at hand.'

'And for the same reasons?' enquired Lothair.

'Not exactly,' said Theodora, 'but in this instance science and revelation have arrived at the same result, and that is what all desire.'

'All that I said was,' said Gozelius, 'that the action of the sun had become so irregular that I thought the chances were in favour of the destruction of our planet. At least, if I were a public office, I would not insure it.'

'Yet the risk would not be very great under those circumstances,' said Theodora.

'The destruction of this world is foretold,' said Lothair; 'the stars are to fall from the sky; but while I credit, I cannot bring my mind to comprehend, such a catastrophe.'

'I have seen a world created and a world destroyed,' said Gozelius. 'The last was flickering ten years, and it went out as I was watching it.'

'And the first?' enquired Lothair anxiously.

'Disturbed space for half a century; a great pregnancy. William Herschel told me it would come when I was a boy, and I cruised for it through two-thirds of my life. It came at last, and it repaid me.'

There was a stir. Euphrosyne was going to sing with her sister. They swept by Lothair in their progress to the instrument, like the passage of sultanas to some kiosk on the Bosphorus. It seemed to him that he had never beheld anything so resplendent. The air was perfumed by their movement and the rustling of their wondrous robes. 'They must be of the Aryan race,' through Lothair, 'though not of the Phidian type.' They sang a Greek air, and their sweet and touching voices blended with exquisite harmony. Everyone was silent in the room, because everyone was entranced. Then they gave their friends some patriotic lay which required a chorus, the sisters in turn singing a stanza. Mr. Phœbus arranged the chorus in a moment, and there clustered round the piano a number of gentlemen almost as good-looking and picturesque as himself. Then while Madame Phœbus was singing, Euphrosyne suddenly and with quickness moved away and approached Theodora, and whispered something to her, but Theodora slightly shook her head and seemed to decline.

Euphrosyne regained the piano, whispered something to Colonel Campian, who was one of the chorus, and then commenced her own part. Colonel Campian crossed the room and spoke to Theodora, who instantly, without the slightest demur, joined her

friends. Lothair felt agitated, as he could not doubt Theodora was going to sing. And so it was; when Euphrosyne had finished, and the chorus she had inspired had died away, there rose a deep contralto sound, which, though without effort, seemed to Lothair the most thrilling tone he had ever listened to. Deeper and richer, and richer and deeper, it seemed to become, as it wound with exquisite facility through a symphony of delicious sound, until it ended in a passionate burst, which made Lothair's heart beat so tumultuously that for a moment he thought he should be overpowered.

'I never heard anything so fine in my life,' said Lothair to the French philosopher.

'Ah! if you had heard that woman sing the Marseillaise, as I did once, to three thousand people, then you would know what was fine. Not one of us who would not have died on the spot for her!'

The concert was over. The Princess of Tivoli had risen to say farewell. She stood apart with Theodora, holding both her hands, and speaking with earnestness. Then she pressed her lips to Theodora's forehead and said, 'Adieu, my best beloved; the spring will return.'

The Princess had disappeared, and Madame Phœbus came up to say good night to her hostess.

'It is such a delicious night,' said Theodora, 'that I have ordered our strawberries and cream on the terrace. You must not go.'

And so she invited them all to the terrace. There was not a breath of air, the garden was flooded with moonlight in which the fountain glittered, and the atmosphere was as sweet as it was warm.

'I think the moon will melt the ice to-night,' said Theodora as she led Madame Phœbus to a table cov-

ered with that innocent refreshment in many forms, and pyramids of strawberries, and gentle drinks which the fancy of America could alone devise.

'I wonder we did not pass the whole evening on the terrace,' said Lothair.

'One must sing in a room,' said Euphrosyne, 'or the nightingales would eclipse us.'

Lothair looked quickly at the speaker, and caught the glance of a peculiar countenance: mockery blended with Ionian splendour.

'I think strawberries and cream the most popular of all food,' said Madame Phœbus, as some touched her beautiful lips.

'Yes; and one is not ashamed of eating it,' said Theodora.

Soon there was that stir which precedes the breaking up of an assembly. Mrs. Giles and some others had to return to town. Madame Phœbus and Euphrosyne were near neighbours at Roehampton, but their carriage had been for some time waiting. Mr. Phœbus did not accompany them. He chose to walk home on such a night, and descended into the garden with his remaining friends.

'They are going to smoke,' said Theodora to Lothair. 'Is it your habit?'

'Not yet.

'I do not dislike it in the air and at a distance; but I banish them the terrace. I think smoking must be a great consolation to a soldier;' and as she spoke, she moved, and, without formally inviting him, he found himself walking by her side.

Rather abruptly he said, 'You wore last night at the opera the same ornament as on the first time I had the pleasure of meeting you.'

She looked at him with a smile, and a little surprised. 'My solitary trinket; I fear you will never see any other.'

'But you do not despise trinkets?' said Lothair.

'Oh! no, they are very well. Once I was decked with jewels and ropes of pearls, like Titian's Queen of Cyprus. I sometimes regret my pearls. There is a reserve about pearls which I like, something soft and dim. But they are all gone, and I ought not to regret them, for they went in a good cause. I kept the star, because it was given to me by a hero, and once we flattered ourselves it was a symbol.'

'I wish I were a hero,' said Lothair.

'You may yet prove one.'

'And if I do, may I give you a star?'

'If it be symbolical.'

'But of what?'

'Of an heroic purpose.'

'But what is an heroic purpose?' exclaimed Lothair. 'Instead of being here to-night, I ought perhaps to have been present at a religious function of the highest and deepest import, which might have influenced my destiny and led to something heroic. But my mind is uncertain and unsettled. I speak to you without reserve, for my heart always entirely opens to you, and I have a sort of unlimited confidence in your judgment. Besides, I have never forgotten what you said at Oxford about religion: that you could not conceive society without religion. It is what I feel myself, and most strongly; and yet there never was a period when religion was so assailed. There is no doubt the atheists are bolder, are more completely organised, both as to intellectual and even physical force, than ever was known. I have

heard that from the highest authority. For my own part, I think I am prepared to die for Divine truth. I have examined myself severely, but I do not think I should falter. Indeed, can there be for man a nobler duty than to be the champion of God? But then the question of the Churches interferes. If there were only one Church, I could see my way. Without a Church there can be no true religion, because otherwise you have no security for the truth. I am a member of the Church of England, and when I was at Oxford I thought the Anglican view might be sustained. But of late I have given my mind deeply to these matters, for after all they are the only matters a man should think of; and I confess to you the claim of Rome to orthodoxy seems to me irresistible.'

'You make no distinction, then, between religion and orthodoxy,' said Theodora.

'Certainly I make no difference.'

'And yet what is orthodox at Dover is not orthodox at Calais or Ostend. I should be sorry to think that, because there was no orthodoxy in Belgium or France, there was no religion.'

'Yes,' said Lothair, 'I think I see what you mean.'

'Then again, if we go further,' continued Theodora, 'there is the whole of the East; that certainly is not orthodox according to your views: you may not agree with all or any of their opinions, but you could scarcely maintain that, as communities, they are irreligious.'

'Well, you could not certainly,' said Lothair.

'So you see,' said Theodora, 'what is called orthodoxy has very little to do with religion; and a person may be very religious without holding the

same dogmas as yourself, or, as some think, without holding any.'

'According to you, then,' said Lothair, 'the Anglican view might be maintained.'

'I do not know what the Anglican view is,' said Theodora. 'I do not belong to the Roman or to the Anglican Church.'

'And yet you are very religious,' said Lothair.

'I hope so; I try to be so; and when I fail in any duty, it is not the fault of my religion. I never deceive myself into that; I know it is my own fault.'

There was a pause; but they walked on. The soft splendour of the scene and all its accessories, the moonlight, and the fragrance, and the falling waters, wonderfully bewitched the spirit of the young Lothair.

'There is nothing I would not tell you,' he suddenly exclaimed, turning to Theodora, 'and sometimes I think there is nothing you would not tell me. Tell me then, I entreat you, what is your religion?'

'The true religion, I think,' said Theodora. 'I worship in a church where I believe God dwells, and dwells for my guidance and my good: my conscience.'

'Your conscience may be divine,' said Lothair, 'and I believe it is; but the consciences of other persons are not divine, and what is to guide them, and what is to prevent or to mitigate the evil they would perpetrate?'

'I have never heard from priests,' said Theodora, 'any truth which my conscience had not revealed to me. They use different language from what I use, but I find after a time that we mean the same thing.

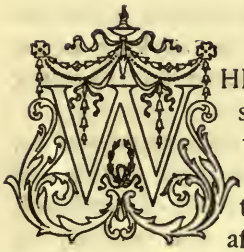
What I call time, they call eternity; when they describe heaven, they give a picture of earth; and beings whom they style divine they invest with all the attributes of humanity.'

'And yet is it not true,' said Lothair, 'that——'

But at this moment there were the sounds of merriment and of approaching footsteps; the form of Mr. Phœbus appeared ascending the steps of the terrace, followed by others. The smokers had fulfilled their task. There were farewells, and bows, and good nights. Lothair had to retire with the others, and as he threw himself into his brougham he exclaimed, 'I perceive that life is not so simple an affair as I once supposed.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

MIRANDOLA.



HEN the stranger who had proved so opportune an ally to Lothair at the Fenian meeting separated from his companion, he proceeded in the direction of Pentonville, and, after pursuing his way through a number of obscure streets, but quiet, decent, and monotonous, he stopped at a small house in a row of many residences, all of them in form, size, colour, and general character so identical, that the number on the door could alone assure the visitor that he was not in error when he sounded the knocker.

'Ah! is it you, Captain Bruges?' said the smiling and blushing maiden who answered to his summons. 'We have not seen you for a long time.'

'Well, you look as kind and as pretty as ever, Jenny,' said the Captain; 'and how is my friend?'

'Well,' said the damsel, and she shrugged her shoulders, 'he mopes. I'm very glad you have come back, Captain, for he sees very few now, and is always writing. I cannot bear that writing; if he would only go and take a good walk, I am sure he would be better.

'There is something in that,' said Captain Bruges. 'And is he at home, and will he see me?'

'Oh! he is always at home to you, Captain; but I will just run up and tell him you are here. You know it is long since we have seen you, Captain; coming on half a year, I think.'

'Time flies, Jenny. Go, my good girl, and I will wait below.'

'In the parlour, if you please, Captain Bruges. It is to let now. It is more than a month since the Doctor left us. That was a loss, for as long as the Doctor was here, he always had some one to speak with.'

So Captain Bruges entered the little dining-room, with its mahogany table, and half-a-dozen chairs, and cellaret, and over the fireplace a portrait of Garibaldi, which had been left as a legacy to the landlady by her late lodger, Dr. Tresorio.

The Captain threw a quick glance at the print, and then falling into reverie, with his hands crossed behind him, paced the little chamber, and was soon lost in thoughts which made him unconscious how long had elapsed when the maiden summoned him.

Following her, and ascending the staircase, he was ushered into the front room of the first floor, and there came forward to meet him a man rather below the middle height, but of a symmetrical and imposing mien. His face was grave, not to say sad; thought, not time, had partially silvered the clustering of his raven hair; but intellectual power reigned in his wide brow, while determination was the character of the rest of his countenance under great control, yet apparently, from the dark flashing of his eye, not incompatible with fanaticism.

'General,' he exclaimed, 'your presence always reanimates me. I shall at least have some news on which I can rely. Your visit is sudden; sudden things are often happy ones. Is there anything stirring in the promised land? Speak, speak! You have a thousand things to say, and I have a thousand ears.'

'My dear Mirandola,' replied the visitor, 'I will take leave to call into council a friend whose presence is always profitable.'

So saying, he took out a cigar-case, and offered it to his companion.

'We have smoked together in palaces,' said Mirandola, accepting the proffer with a delicate white hand.

'But not these cigars,' replied the General. 'They are superb, my only reward for all my transatlantic work, and sometimes I think a sufficient one.'

'And Jenny shall give us a capital cup of coffee,' said Mirandola; 'it is the only hospitality that I can offer my friends. Give me a light, my General; and now, how are things?'

'Well, at the first glance, very bad; the French have left Rome, and we are not in it.'

'Well, that is an infamy not of to-day or yesterday,' replied Mirandola, 'though not less an infamy. We talked over this six months ago, when you were over here about something else, and from that moment unto the present I have with unceasing effort laboured to erase this stigma from the human consciousness, but with no success. Men are changed; public spirit is extinct; the deeds of '48 are to the present generation as incomprehensible as the Punic wars or the feats of Marius against the Cimbri. What

we want are the most natural things in the world, and easy of attainment because they are natural. We want our metropolis, our native frontiers, and true liberty. Instead of these we have compromises, conventions, provincial jealousies, and French prefects. It is disgusting, heartrending; sometimes I fear my own energies are waning. My health is wretched; writing and speaking are decidedly bad for me, and I pass my life in writing and speaking. Towards evening I feel utterly exhausted, and am sometimes, which I thought I never could be, the victim of despondency. The loss of 'the Doctor was a severe blow, but they harried him out of the place. The man of Paris would never rest till he was gone. I was myself thinking of once more trying Switzerland, but the obstacles are great; and, in truth, I was at my darkest moment when Jenny brought me the light of your name.'

The General, who had bivouacked on a group of small chairs, his leg on one, his elbow on another, took his cigar from his mouth and delivered himself of a volume of smoke, and then said dryly, 'Things may not be so bad as they seem, comrade. Your efforts have not been without fruit. I have traced them in many quarters, and, indeed, it is about their possible consequences that I have come over to consult with you.'

'Idle words, I know, never escape those lips,' said Mirandola; 'speak on.'

'Well,' said the General, 'you see that people are a little exhausted by the efforts of last year; and it must be confessed that no slight results were accomplished. The freedom of Venice——'

'A French intrigue,' exclaimed Mirandola. 'The

freedom of Venice is the price of the slavery of Rome. I heard of it with disgust.'

'Well, we do not differ much on that head,' said the General. 'I am not a Roman as you are, but I view Rome, with reference to the object of my life, with feelings not less ardent and absorbing than yourself, who would wish to see it again the empress of the world. I am a soldier, and love war, and, left to myself, would care little perhaps for what form of government I combated, provided the army was constituted on the principles of fraternity and equality; but the passion of my life, to which I have sacrificed military position, and perhaps,' he added in a lower tone, 'perhaps even military fame, has been to destroy priestcraft, and, so long as the Pope rules in Rome, it will be supreme.'

'We have struck him down once,' said Mirandola.

'And I hope we shall again, and for ever,' said the General, 'and it is about that I would speak. You are in error in supposing that your friends do not sympathise with you, or that their answers are dilatory or evasive. There is much astir; the old spirit is not extinct, but the difficulties are greater than in former days when we had only the Austrians to encounter, and we cannot afford to make another failure.'

'There could be no failure if we were clear and determined. There must be a hundred thousand men who would die for our metropolis, our natural frontiers, and true liberty. The mass of the pseudo-Italian army must be with us. As for foreign interference, its repetition seems to me impossible. The brotherhood in the different countries, if well guided, could alone prevent it. There should be at once a manifesto

addressed to the peoples. They have become absorbed in money-grubbing and what they call industry. The external life of a nation is its most important one. A nation, as an individual, has duties to fulfil appointed by God and His moral law: the individual towards his family, his town, his country; the nation towards the country of countries, humanity: the outward world. I firmly believe that we fail and renounce the religious and divine element of our life whenever we betray or neglect those duties. The internal activity of a nation is important and sacred because it prepares the instrument for its appointed task. It is mere egotism if it converges towards itself, degrading and doomed to expiation; as will be the fate of this country in which we now dwell,' added Mirandola, in a hushed voice. 'England had a mission: it had belief, and it had power. It announced itself the representative of religious, commercial, and political freedom, and yet, when it came to action, it allowed Denmark to be crushed by Austria and Prussia, and, in the most nefarious transaction of modern times, uttered the approving shriek of "Perish Savoy!"'

'My dear Mirandola,' said the General, trimming his cigar, 'there is no living man who appreciates your genius and your worth more than myself; perhaps I might say there is no living man who has had equal opportunities of estimating them. You formed the mind of our country; you kindled and kept alive the sacred flame when all was gloom, and all were without heart. Such prodigious devotion, so much resource and pertinacity and patience, such unbroken spirit, were never before exhibited by men, and, whatever may be said by your enemies, I know that in the greatest hour of action you proved equal

to it; and yet at this moment, when your friends are again stirring, and there is a hope of spring, I am bound to tell you that there are only two persons in the world who can effect the revolution, and you are not one of them.'

'I am ardent, my General, perhaps too sanguine, but I have no self-love, at least none when the interests of the great cause are at stake. Tell me, then, their names, and count, if required, on my co-operation.'

'Garibaldi and Mary Anne.'

'A Polchinello and a Bayadère!' exclaimed Mirandola, and, springing from his seat, he impatiently paced the room.

'And yet,' continued the General calmly, 'there is no manner of doubt that Garibaldi is the only name that could collect ten thousand men at any given point in Italy; while in France, though her influence is mythical, the name of Mary Anne is a name of magic. Though never mentioned, it is never forgotten. And the slightest allusion to it among the initiated will open every heart. There are more secret societies in France at this moment than at any period since '85, though you hear nothing of them; and they believe in Mary Anne, and in nothing else.'

'You have been at Caprera?' said Mirandola.

'I have been at Caprera.'

'And what did he say?'

'He will do nothing without the sanction of the Savoyard.'

'He wants to get wounded in his other foot,' said Mirandola, with savage sarcasm. 'Will he never weary of being betrayed?'

'I found him calm and sanguine,' said the General.

'What of the woman?'

'Garibaldi will not move without the Savoyard, and Mary Anne will not move without Garibaldi; that is the situation.'

'Have you seen her?'

'Not yet; I have been to Caprera, and I have come over to see her and you. Italy is ready for the move, and is only waiting for the great man. He will not act without the Savoyard; he believes in him. I will not be sceptical. There are difficulties enough without imagining any. We have no money, and all our sources of supply are drained; but we have the inspiration of a sacred cause, we have you; we may gain others, and, at any rate, the French are no longer at Rome.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A Rope of Pearls.

HE Goodwood Cup, my lord; the Doncaster. This pair of flagons for his Highness the Khedive, something quite new. Yes, parcel-gilt, the only style now; it gives relief to design: yes, by Monti, a great man, hardly inferior to Flaxman, if at all. Flaxman worked for Rundell and Bridge in the old days, one of the principal causes of their success. Your lordship's gold service was supplied by Rundell and Bridge. Very fine service indeed, much by Flaxman: nothing of that kind seen now.'

'I never did see it,' said Lothair. He was replying to Mr. Ruby, a celebrated jeweller and goldsmith, in a celebrated street, who had saluted him when he had entered the shop, and called the attention of Lothair to a group of treasures of art.

'Strange,' said Mr. Ruby, smiling. 'It is in the next room, if your lordship would like to see it. I think your lordship should see your gold service. Mr. Putney Giles ordered it here to be examined and put in order.'

'I should like to see it very much,' said Lothair, 'though I came to speak to you about something else.'

And so Lothair, following Mr. Ruby into an inner apartment, had the gratification, for the first time, of seeing his own service of gold plate laid out in completeness, and which had been for some time exhibited to the daily admiration of that favoured portion of the English people who frequent the brilliant and glowing counters of Mr. Ruby.

Not that Lothair was embarrassed by their presence at this moment. The hour of their arrival had not yet come. Business had not long commenced when Lothair entered the shop, somewhat to the surprise of its master. Those who know Bond Street only in the blaze of fashionable hours can form but an imperfect conception of its matutinal charm, when it is still shady and fresh, when there are no carriages, rarely a cart, and passers-by gliding about on real business. One feels as in some continental city. Then there are time and opportunity to look at the shops; and there is no street in the world that can furnish such a collection, filled with so many objects of beauty, curiosity, and interest. The jewellers and goldsmiths and dealers in rare furniture, porcelain, and cabinets, and French pictures, have long fixed upon Bond Street as their favourite quarter, and are not chary of displaying their treasures; though it may be a question whether some of the magazines of fancy food, delicacies culled from all the climes and regions of the globe, particularly at the matin hour, may not, in their picturesque variety, be the most attractive. The palm, perhaps, would be given to the fishmongers, with their exuberant exhibitions,

grouped with skill, startling often with strange forms, dazzling with prismatic tints, and breathing the invigorating redolence of the sea.

'Well, I like the service,' said Lothair, 'and am glad, as you tell me, that its fashion has come round again, because there will now be no necessity for ordering a new one. I do not myself much care for plate. I like flowers and porcelain on a table, and I like to see the guests. However, I suppose it is all right, and I must use it. It was not about plate that I called; I wanted to speak to you about pearls.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Ruby, and his face brightened; and ushering Lothair to some glass cases, he at the same time provided his customer with a seat.

'Something like that?' said Mr. Ruby, who by this time had slid into his proper side of the counter, and was unlocking the glass cases; 'something like that?' and he placed before Lothair a string of pretty pearls with a diamond clasp. 'With the earrings, twenty-five hundred,' he added; and then, observing that Lothair did not seem enchanted, he said, 'This is something quite new,' and he carelessly pushed towards Lothair a magnificent necklace of turquoises and brilliants.

It was impossible not to admire it, the arrangement was so novel and yet of such good taste; but though its price was double that of the pearl necklace, Mr. Ruby did not seem to wish to force attention to it, for he put in Lothair's hands almost immediately the finest emerald necklace in the world, and set in a style that was perfectly ravishing.

'The setting is from the Campana collection,' said Mr. Ruby. 'They certainly understood things in those days, but I can say that, so far as mere workmanship

is concerned, this quite equals them. I have made one for the Empress. Here is a black pearl, very rare, pear shape, and set in Golconda diamonds, two thousand guineas ; it might be suspended to a necklace, or worn as a locket. This is pretty,' and he offered to Lothair a gigantic sapphire in brilliants and in the form of a bracelet.

'The finest sapphire I know is in this ring,' added Mr. Ruby, and he introduced his visitor to a tray of precious rings. 'I have a pearl bracelet here that your lordship might like to see,' and he placed before Lothair a case of fifty bracelets, vying with each other in splendour.

'But what I want,' said Lothair, 'are pearls.'

'I understand,' said Mr. Ruby. 'This is a curious thing,' and he took out a paper packet. 'There!' he said, opening it and throwing it before Lothair so carelessly that some of the stones ran over the glass covering of the counter. 'There, that is a thing not to be seen every day, a packet of diamonds, bought of an Indian prince, and sent by us to be cut and polished at Amsterdam (nothing can be done in that way except there), and just returned ; nothing very remarkable as to size, but all of high quality : some fine stones ; that, for example,' and he touched one with the long nail of his little finger ; 'that is worth seven hundred guineas, the whole packet worth perhaps ten thousand pounds.'

'Very interesting,' said Lothair, 'but what I want are pearls. That necklace which you have shown me is like the necklace of a doll. I want pearls, such as you see in Italian pictures, Titians and Giorgiones, such as a Queen of Cyprus would wear. I want ropes of pearls.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Ruby, 'I know what your lordship means. Lady Bideford had something of that kind. She very much deceived us: always told us her necklace must be sold at her death, and she had very bad health. We waited, but when she went, poor lady, it was claimed by the heir, and is in Chancery at this very moment. The Justinianis have ropes of pearls; Madame Justiniani of Paris, I have been told, gives a rope to every one of her children when they marry; but there is no expectation of a Justiniani parting with anything. Pearls are troublesome property, my lord. They require great care; they want both air and exercise; they must be worn frequently; you cannot lock them up. The Duchess of Havant has the finest pearls in this country, and I told her Grace, "Wear them whenever you can, wear them at breakfast;" and her Grace follows my advice, she does wear them at breakfast. I go down to Havant Castle every year to see her Grace's pearls, and I wipe every one of them myself, and let them lie on a sunny bank in the garden, in a westerly wind, for hours and days together. Their complexion would have been ruined had it not been for this treatment. Pearls are like girls, my lord, they require quite as much attention.'

'Then you cannot give me what I want?' said Lothair.

'Well, I can, and I cannot,' said Mr. Ruby. 'I am in a difficulty. I have in this house exactly what your lordship requires, but I have offered them to Lord Topaz, and I have not received his answer. We have instructions to inform his lordship of every very precious jewel that we obtain, and give him the preference as a purchaser. Nevertheless, there

is no one I could more desire to oblige than your lordship; your lordship has every claim upon us, and I should be truly glad to find these pearls in your lordship's possession if I could only see my way. Perhaps your Lordship would like to look at them?'

'Certainly, but pray do not leave me here alone with all these treasures,' said Lothair, as Mr. Ruby was quitting the apartment.

'Oh! my lord, with you!'

'Yes, that is all very well; but if anything is missed hereafter, it will always be remembered that these jewels were in my possession, and I was alone. I highly object to it.' But Mr. Ruby had vanished, and did not immediately reappear. In the meantime it was impossible for Lothair to move: he was alone and surrounded with precious necklaces, and glittering rings, and gorgeous bracelets, with loose diamonds running over the counter. It was not a kind or an amount of property that Lothair, relinquishing the trust, could satisfactorily deliver to a shopman. The shopman, however honest, might be suddenly tempted by Satan, and take the next train to Liverpool. He felt therefore relieved when Mr. Ruby re-entered the room, breathless, with a velvet casket. 'I beg pardon, my lord, a thousand pardons, but I thought I would just run over to Lord Topaz, only in the square close by. His lordship is at Madrid, the only city one cannot depend on communications with by telegraph. Spaniards, strange people, very prejudiced, take all sorts of fancies in their head. Besides, Lord Topaz has more pearls than he can know what to do with, and I should like your lordship to see these,' and he opened the casket.

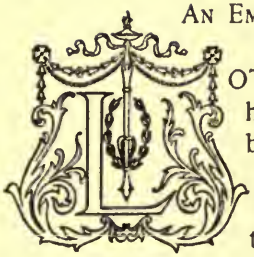
'Exactly what I want,' exclaimed Lothair; 'these must be the very pearls the Queen of Cyprus wore. What is their price?'

'They are from Genoa and belonged to a Doge,' said Mr. Ruby; 'your lordship shall have them for the sum we gave for them. There shall be no profit on the transaction, and we shall be proud of it. We gave for them four thousand guineas.'

'I will take them with me,' said Lothair, who was afraid, if he left them behind, Lord Topaz might arrive in the interval.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

An Embarrassing Charge.



OTHAIR had returned home from his last visit to Belmont agitated by many thoughts, but, generally speaking, deeply musing over its mistress. Considerable speculation on religion, the Churches, the solar system, the cosmical order, the purpose of creation, and the destiny of man, was maintained in his too rapid progress from Roehampton to his Belgravian hotel; but the association of ideas always terminated the consideration of every topic by a wondering and deeply interesting enquiry when he should see her again. And here, in order to simplify this narrative, we will at once chronicle the solution of this grave question. On the afternoon of the next day, Lothair mounted his horse with the intention of calling on Lady St. Jerome, and perhaps some other persons, but it is curious to observe that he soon found himself on the road to Roehampton, where he was in due time paying a visit to Theodora. But what is more remarkable is that the same result occurred every day afterwards. Regularly every day he

paid a visit to Belmont. Nor was this all; very often he paid two visits, for he remembered that in the evening Theodora was always at home. Lothair used to hurry to town from his morning visit, dine at some great house, which satisfied the demands of society, and then drive down to Roehampton. The guests of the evening saloon, when they witnessed the high ceremony of Lothair's manner, which was natural to him, when he entered, and the welcome of Theodora, could hardly believe that a few hours only had elapsed since their separation.

And what was the manner of Theodora to him when they were alone? Precisely as before. She never seemed in the least surprised that he called on her every day, or even twice a day. Sometimes she was alone, frequently she had companions, but she was always the same, always appeared gratified at his arrival, and always extended to him the same welcome, graceful and genial, but without a spark of coquetry. Yet she did not affect to conceal that she took a certain interest in him, because she was careful to introduce him to distinguished men, and would say, 'You should know him; he is master of such a subject. You will hear things that you ought to know.' But all this in a sincere and straightforward manner. Theodora had not the slightest affectation; she was always natural, though a little reserved. But this reserve appeared to be the result of modesty rather than of any desire of concealment. When they were alone, though always calm, she would talk with freedom and vivacity, but in the presence of others she rather led to their display, and encouraged them, often with a certain degree of adroit simplicity, to descant on topics which interested them, or of which

they were competent to treat. Alone with Lothair, and they were often alone, though she herself never obtruded the serious subjects round which he was always fluttering, she never avoided them, and without involving herself in elaborate arguments, or degenerating into conversational controversy, she had a habit of asking a question, or expressing a sentiment, which greatly affected his feelings or perplexed his opinions.

Had not the season been long waning, this change in the life of Lothair must have been noticed, and its cause ultimately discovered. But the social critics cease to be observant towards the end of July. All the world then are thinking of themselves, and have no time to speculate on the fate and fortunes of their neighbours. The campaign is too near its close; the balance of the season must soon be struck, the great book of society made. In a few weeks, even in a few days, what long and subtle plans shattered or triumphant! what prizes gained or missed! what baffled hopes, and what broken hearts! The baffled hopes must go to Cowes, and the broken hearts to Baden. There were some great ladies who did remark that Lothair was seldom seen at balls; and Hugo Bohun, who had been staying at his aunt Lady Gertrude's villa for change of air, did say to Bertram that he had met Lothair twice on Barnes Common, and asked Bertram if he knew the reason why. But the fact that Lothair was cruising in waters which their craft never entered, combined with the lateness of the season to baffle all the ingenuity of Hugo Bohun, though he generally found out everything.

The great difficulty which Lothair had to apprehend was with his Roman Catholic friends. The sys-

tem of the Monsignori was never to let him be out of sight, and his absence from the critical function had not only disappointed but alarmed them. But the Jesuits are wise men; they never lose their temper. They know when to avoid scenes as well as when to make them. Monsignore Catesby called on Lothair as frequently as before, and never made the slightest allusion to the miscarriage of their expectations. Strange to say, the innocent Lothair, naturally so straightforward and so honourable, found himself instinctively, almost it might be said unconsciously, defending himself against his invaders with some of their own weapons. He still talked about building his cathedral, of which, not contented with mere plans, he even gave orders that a model should be made, and he still received statements on points of faith from Father Coleman, on which he made marginal notes and queries. Monsignore Catesby was not altogether satisfied. He was suspicious of some disturbing cause, but at present it baffled him. Their hopes, however, were high; and they had cause to be sanguine. In a month's time or so, Lothair would be in the country to celebrate his majority; his guardian the Cardinal was to be his guest; the St. Jeromes were invited, Monsignore Catesby himself. Here would be opportunity and actors to avail themselves of it.

It was a very few days after the first evening visit of Lothair to Belmont that he found himself one morning alone with Theodora. She was in her bowery boudoir, copying some music for Madame Phœbus, at least in the intervals of conversation. That had not been of a grave character, but the contrary, when Lothair rather abruptly said, 'Do you agree, Mrs.

Campian, with what Mr. Phœbus said the other night, that the greatest pain must be the sense of death?'

'Then mankind is generally spared the greatest pain,' she replied, 'for I apprehend few people are sensible of death, unless indeed,' she added, 'it be on the field of battle; and there, I am sure, it cannot be painful.'

'Not on the field of battle?' asked Lothair, inducing her to proceed.

'Well, I should think for all, on the field of battle, there must be a degree of excitement, and of sympathetic excitement, scarcely compatible with overwhelming suffering; but if death were encountered there for a great cause, I should rather associate it with rapture than pain.'

'But still a good number of persons must die in their beds and be conscious,' said Lothair.

'It may be, though I should doubt it. The witnesses of such a demise are never impartial. All I have loved and lost have died upon the field of battle; and those who have suffered pain have been those whom they have left behind; and that pain,' she added, with some emotion, 'may perhaps deserve the description of Mr. Phœbus.'

Lothair would not pursue the subject, and there was rather an awkward pause. Theodora herself broke it, and in a lighter vein, though recurring to the same theme, she said with a slight smile, 'I am scarcely a competent person to consult upon this subject, for, to be candid with you, I do not myself believe in death. There is a change, and doubtless a great one, painful it may be, certainly very perplexing, but I have a profound conviction of my immortality, and I do not believe that I shall rest in my grave *in*

sæcula sæculorum, only to be convinced of it by the last trump.'

'I hope you will not leave this world before I do,' said Lothair; 'but if that sorrow be reserved for me, promise that to me, if only once, you will reappear.'

'I doubt whether the departed have that power,' said Theodora, 'or else I think my heroes would have revisited me. I lost a father more magnificent than Jove, and two brothers brighter than Apollo, and all of them passionately loved me, and yet they have not come; but I shall see them, and perhaps soon. So you see, my dear lord,' speaking more briskly, and rising rather suddenly from her seat, 'that for my part I think it best to arrange all that concerns one in this world while one inhabits it; and this reminds me that I have a little business to fulfil in which you can help me,' and she opened a cabinet and took out a flat antique case, and then said, resuming her seat at her table, 'Some one, and anonymously, has made me a magnificent present; some strings of costly pearls. I am greatly embarrassed with them, for I never wear pearls or anything else, and I never wish to accept presents. To return them to an unknown is out of my power, but it is not impossible that I may some day become acquainted with the donor. I wish them to be kept in safety, and therefore not by myself, for my life is subject to too great vicissitudes. I have therefore placed them in this case, which I shall now seal and entrust them to your care, as a friend in whom I have entire confidence. See,' she said, lighting a match, and opening the case, 'here are the pearls, are they not superb? and here is a note which will tell you what to do with them in case of my absence, when you open

the case, which will not be for a year from this day. There, it is locked. I have directed it to you, and I will seal it with my father's seal.'

Lothair was about to speak. 'Do not say a word,' she said; 'this seal is a religious ceremony with me.' She was some little time fulfilling it, so that the impression might be deep and clear. She looked at it earnestly while the wax was cooling, and then she said, 'I deliver the custody of this to a friend whom I entirely trust. Adieu!' and she disappeared.

The amazed Lothair glanced at the seal. It was a single word, 'Roma,' and then utterly mystified, he returned to town with his own present.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Hero and Leander.

MR. PHŒBUS had just finished a picture which he had painted for the Emperor of Russia. It was to depart immediately from England for its northern home, except that his Imperial Majesty had consented that it should be exhibited for a brief space to the people of England. This was a condition which Mr. Phœbus had made in the interests of art, and as a due homage alike to his own patriotism and celebrity.

There was to be a private inspection of the picture at the studio of the artist, and Mr. Phœbus had invited Lothair to attend it. Our friend had accordingly, on the appointed day, driven down to Belmont, and then walked to the residence of Mr. Phœbus with Colonel Campian and his wife. It was a short and pretty walk, entirely through the royal park, which the occupiers of Belmont had the traditionary privilege thus to use.

The residence of Mr. Phœbus was convenient and agreeable, and in situation not unlike that of Belmont, being sylvan and sequestered. He had himself erected a fine studio, and added it to the original building. The flower garden was bright and curious,

and on the lawn was a tent of many colours designed by himself, and which might have suited some splendid field of chivalry. Upon gilt and painted perches also there were paroquets and macaws.

Lothair on his arrival found many guests assembled, chiefly on the lawn. Mr. Phœbus was highly esteemed, and had distinguished and eminent friends, whose constant courtesies the present occasion allowed him elegantly to acknowledge. There was a polished and grey-headed noble who was the head of the patrons of art in England, whose nod of approbation sometimes made the fortune of a young artist, and whose purchase of pictures for the nation even the furious *cognoscenti* of the House of Commons dared not question. Some of the finest works of Mr. Phœbus were to be found in his gallery; but his lordship admired Madame Phœbus even more than her husband's works, and Euphrosyne as much as her sister. It was sometimes thought, among their friends, that this young lady had only to decide in order to share the widowed coronet; but Euphrosyne laughed at everything, even her adorers; and while her witching mockery only rendered them more fascinated, it often prevented critical declarations.

And Lady Beatrice was there, herself an artist, and full of æsthetical enthusiasm. Her hands were beautiful, and she passed her life in modelling them. And Cecrops was there, a rich old bachelor, with, it was supposed, the finest collection of modern pictures extant. His theory was, that a man could not do a wiser thing than invest the whole of his fortune in such securities, and it delighted him to tell his numerous nephews and nieces that he should, in all probability, leave his collection to the nation.

Clorinda, whose palace was always open to genius, and who delighted in the society of men who had discovered planets, excavated primæval mounds, painted pictures on new principles, or composed immortal poems which no human being could either scan or construe, but which she recognised as 'subtle' and full of secret melody, came leaning on the arm of a celebrated plenipotentiary, and beaming with sympathy on every subject, and with the consciousness of her universal charms.

And the accomplished Sir Francis was there, and several R.A.s of eminence, for Phœbus was a true artist and loved the brotherhood, and always placed them in the post of honour.

No language can describe the fascinating costume of Madame Phœbus and her glittering sister. 'They are habited as sylvans,' the great artist deigned to observe, if any of his guests could not refrain from admiring the dresses which he had himself devised. As for the venerable patron of art in Britain, he smiled when he met the lady of the house, and sighed when he glanced at Euphrosyne; but the first gave him a beautiful flower, and the other fastened it in his buttonhole. He looked like a victim bedecked by the priestesses of some old fane of Hellenic loveliness, and proud of his impending fate. What could the Psalmist mean in the immortal passage? Threescore and ten, at the present day, is the period of romantic passions. As for our enamoured sexagenarians, they avenge the theories of our cold-hearted youth.

Mr. Phœbus was an eminent host. It delighted him to see people pleased, and pleased under his influence. He had a belief, not without foundation, that everything was done better under his roof than

under that of any other person. The banquet in the air on the present occasion could only be done justice to by the courtly painters of the reign of Louis XV. Vanloo, and Watteau, and Lancré would have caught the graceful groups, and the well-arranged colours, and the faces, some pretty, some a little affected; the ladies on fantastic chairs of wicker-work, gilt and curiously painted; the gentlemen, reclining on the turf, or bending behind them with watchful care. The little tables, all different, the soups in delicate cups of Sèvres, the wines in golden glass of Venice, the ortolans, the Italian confectionery, the bright bouquets, were worthy of the soft and invisible music that resounded from the pavilion, only varied by the coquettish scream of some macaw, jealous amid all this novelty and excitement of not being noticed.

'It is a scene of enchantment,' whispered the chief patron of British art to Madame Phœbus.

'I always think luncheon in the air rather jolly,' said Madame Phœbus.

'It is perfect romance!' murmured the chief patron of British art to Euphrosyne.

'With a due admixture of reality,' she said, helping him to an enormous truffle, which she extracted from its napkin. 'You know you must eat it with butter.'

Lothair was glad to observe that, though in refined society, none were present with whom he had any previous acquaintance, for he had an instinctive feeling that if Hugo Bohun had been there, or Bertram, or the Duke of Brecon, or any ladies with whom he was familiarly acquainted, he would scarcely have been able to avail himself of the society of Theodora

with the perfect freedom which he now enjoyed. They would all have been asking who she was, where she came from, how long Lothair had known her: all those questions, kind and neighbourly, which under such circumstances occur. He was in a distinguished circle, but one different from that in which he lived. He sat next to Theodora, and Mr. Phœbus constantly hovered about them, ever doing something very graceful, or saying something very bright. Then he would whisper a word to the great Clorinda, who flashed intelligence from her celebrated eyes, and then he made a suggestion to the æsthetical Lady Beatrice, who immediately fell into enthusiasm and eloquence, and took the opportunity of displaying her celebrated hands.

The time had now arrived when they were to repair to the studio and view the picture. A curtain was over it, and then a silken rope across the chamber, and then some chairs. The subject of the picture was Hero and Leander, chosen by the heir of all the Russias himself, during a late visit to England.

'A fascinating subject,' said old Cecrops to Mr. Phœbus, 'but not a very original one.'

'The originality of a subject is in its treatment,' was the reply.

The theme, in the present instance, was certainly not conventionally treated. When the curtain was withdrawn, they beheld a figure of life-like size, exhibiting in undisguised completeness the perfection of the female form, and yet the painter had so skilfully availed himself of the shadowy and mystic hour and of some gauze-like drapery, which veiled without concealing his design, that the chastest eye might gaze on his heroine with impunity. The splendour of her

upstretched arms held high the beacon light, which threw a glare upon the sublime anxiety of her countenance, while all the tumult of the Hellespont, the waves, the scudding sky, the opposite shore revealed by a blood-red flash, were touched by the hand of a master who had never failed.

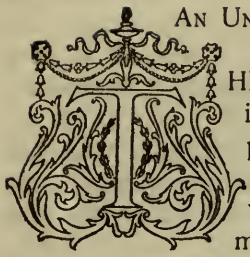
The applause was a genuine verdict, and the company after a time began to disperse about the house and gardens. A small circle remained, and passing the silken rope, approached and narrowly scrutinised the picture. Among these were Theodora and Lothair, the chief patron of British art, an R.A. or two, Clorinda, and Lady Beatrice.

Mr. Phœbus, who had left the studio but had now returned, did not disturb them. After awhile he approached the group. His air was elate, and was redeemed only from arrogance by the intellect of his brow. The circle started a little as they heard his voice, for they had been unaware of his presence.

'To-morrow,' he said, 'the critics will commence. You know who the critics are? The men who have failed in literature and art.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

An Unexpected Encounter.



HE lodge-gate of Belmont was opening as Lothair one morning approached it; a hansom cab came forth, and in it was a person whose countenance was strongly marked on the memory of Lothair. It was that of his unknown friend at the Fenian meeting. Lothair instantly recognised and cordially saluted him, and his greeting, though hurriedly, was not ungraciously returned; but the vehicle did not stop. Lothair called to the driver to halt, but the driver on the contrary stimulated his steed, and in the winding lane was soon out of sight.

Theodora was not immediately visible. She was neither in her usual apartment nor in her garden; but it was only perhaps because Lothair was so full of his own impressions from his recent encounter at the lodge, that he did not observe that the demeanour of Mrs. Campian when she appeared was hardly marked by her habitual serenity. She entered the room hurriedly, and spoke with quickness.

'Pray,' exclaimed Lothair, rather eagerly, 'do tell me the name of the gentleman who has just called here.'

Theodora changed colour, looked distressed, and was silent; unobserved however by Lothair, who, absorbed by his own highly excited curiosity, proceeded to explain why he presumed to press for the information. 'I am under great obligations to that person; I am not sure I may not say I owe him my life, but certainly an extrication from great danger and very embarrassing danger too. I never saw him but once, and he would not give me his name, and scarcely would accept my thanks. I wanted to stop his cab to-day, but it was impossible. He literally galloped off.'

'He is a foreigner,' said Mrs. Campian, who had recovered herself; 'he was a particular friend of my dear father; and when he visits England, which he does occasionally, he calls to see us.'

'Ah!' said Lothair, 'I hope I shall soon have an opportunity of expressing to him my gratitude.'

'It was so like him not to give his name and to shrink from thanks,' said Mrs. Campian. 'He never enters society and makes no acquaintances.'

'I am sorry for that,' said Lothair, 'for it is not only that he served me, but I was much taken with him, and felt that he was a person I should like to cultivate.'

'Yes, Captain Bruges is a remarkable man,' said Theodora; 'he is not one to be forgotten.'

'Captain Bruges. That then is his name?'

'He is known by the name of Captain Bruges,' said Theodora, and she hesitated; and then speaking more quickly she added, 'I cannot sanction, I cannot bear, any deception between you and this roof. Bruges is not his real name, nor is the title he assumes his real rank. He is not to be known, and not to be

spoken of. He is one, and one of the most eminent, of the great family of sufferers in this world, but sufferers for a Divine cause. I myself have been direly stricken in this struggle. When I remember the departed, it is not always easy to bear the thought. I keep it at the bottom of my heart; but this visit today has too terribly revived everything. It is well that you only are here to witness my suffering, but you will not have to witness it again, for we will never again speak of these matters.'

Lothair was much touched: his good heart and his good taste alike dissuaded him from attempting commonplace consolation. He ventured to take her hand and pressed it to his lips. 'Dear lady!' he murmured, and he led her to a seat. 'I fear my foolish tattle has added to pain which I would gladly bear for you.'

They talked about nothings: about a new horse which Colonel Campian had just purchased, and which he wanted to show to Lothair; an old opera revived, but which sounded rather flat; something amusing that somebody had said, and something absurd which somebody had done. And then, when the ruffled feeling had been quite composed, and all had been brought back to the tenor of their usual pleasant life, Lothair said suddenly and rather gaily, 'And now, dearest lady, I have a favour to ask. You know my majority is to be achieved and to be celebrated next month. I hope that yourself and Colonel Campian will honour me by being my guests.'

Theodora did not at all look like a lady who had received a social attention of the most distinguished class. She looked embarrassed, and began to murmur something about Colonel Campian, and their never going into society.

'Colonel Campian is going to Scotland, and you are going with him,' said Lothair. 'I know it, for he told me so, and said he could manage the visit to me, if you approved it, quite well. In fact, it will fit in with his Scotch visit.'

'There was some talk once about Scotland,' said Theodora, 'but that was a long time ago. Many things have happened since then. I do not think the Scotch visit is by any means so settled as you think.'

'But, however that may be decided,' said Lothair, 'there can be no reason why you should not come to me.'

'It is presumptuous in me, a foreigner, to speak of such matters,' said Theodora; 'but I fancy that, in such celebrations as you contemplate, there is, or there should be, some qualification of blood or family connection for becoming your guests. We should be there quite strangers, and in everybody's way, checking the local and domestic *abandon* which I should suppose is one of the charms of such meetings.'

'I have few relations and scarcely a connection,' said Lothair, rather moodily. 'I can only ask friends to celebrate my majority, and there are no friends whom I so much regard as those who live at Belmont.'

'It is very kind of you to say that, and to feel it; and I know that you would not say it if you did not feel it,' replied Theodora. 'But still, I think it would be better that we should come to see you at a time when you are less engaged; perhaps you will take Colonel Campian down some day and give him some shooting.'

'All I can say is that, if you do not come, it will be the darkest, instead of the brightest, week in my

life,' said Lothair. 'In short, I feel I could not get through the business, I should be so mortified. I cannot restrain my feelings or arrange my countenance. Unless you come, the whole affair will be a complete failure, and worse than a failure.'

'Well, I will speak to Colonel Campian about it,' said Theodora, but with little animation.

'We will both speak to him about it now,' said Lothair, for the Colonel at that moment entered the room and greeted Lothair, as was his custom, cordially.

'We are settling the visit to Muriel,' said Lothair; 'I want to induce Mrs. Campian to come down a day or two before the rest, so that we may have the benefit of her counsel.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Muriel Towers.

URIEL TOWERS crowned a wooded steep, part of a wild and winding and sylvan valley at the bottom of which rushed a foaming stream. On the other side of the castle the scene, though extensive, was not less striking, and was essentially romantic. A vast park spread in all directions beyond the limit of the eye, and with much variety of character, ornate near the mansion, and choicely timbered; in other parts glens and spreading dells, masses of black pines and savage woods; everywhere, sometimes glittering and sometimes sullen, glimpses of the largest natural lake that inland England boasts, Muriel Mere, and in the extreme distance moors, and the first crest of mountains. The park, too, was full of life, for there were not only herds of red and fallow deer, but, in its more secret haunts, wandered a race of wild cattle, extremely savage, white and dove-coloured, and said to be of the time of the Romans.

It was not without emotion that Lothair beheld the chief seat of his race. It was not the first time he had visited it. He had a clear and painful recollection of a brief, hurried, unkind glimpse caught of it in his

very earliest boyhood. His uncle had taken him there by some inconvenient cross-railroad, to avail themselves of which they had risen in the dark on a March morning, and in an east wind. When they arrived at their station they had hired an open fly drawn by a single horse, and when they had thus at last reached the uninhabited Towers, they entered by the offices, where Lothair was placed in the steward's room, by a smoky fire, given something to eat, and told that he might walk about and amuse himself, provided he did not go out of sight of the castle, while his uncle and the steward mounted their horses and rode over the estate; leaving Lothair for hours without companions, and returning just in time in a shivering twilight, to clutch him up, as it were, by the nape of the neck, twist him back again into the one-horse fly, and regain the railroad; his uncle praising himself the whole time for the satisfactory and business-like manner in which he had planned and completed the expedition.

What a contrast to the present circumstances. Although Lothair had wished, and thought he had secured, that his arrival at Muriel should be quite private and even unknown, and that all ceremonies and celebrations should be postponed for a few days, during which he hoped to become a little more familiar with his home, the secret could not be kept, and the county would not tolerate this reserve. He was met at the station by five hundred horsemen all well mounted, and some of them gentlemen of high degree, who insisted upon accompanying him to his gates. His carriage passed under triumphal arches, and choirs of enthusiastic children, waving parochial banners, hymned his auspicious approach.

At the park-gates his cavalcade quitted him, with that delicacy of feeling which always distinguishes Englishmen, however rough their habit. As their attendance was self-invited, they would not intrude upon his home.

'Your lordship will have enough to do to-day without being troubled with us,' said their leader as he shook hands with Lothair.

But Lothair would not part with them thus. With the inspiring recollection of his speech at the Fenian meeting, Lothair was not afraid of rising in his barouche and addressing them. What he said was said very well, and it was addressed to a people who, though the shyest in the world, have a passion for public speaking, than which no achievement more tests reserve. It was something to be a great peer and a great proprietor, and to be young and singularly well-favoured; but to be able to make a speech, and such a good one, such cordial words in so strong and musical a voice: all felt at once they were in the presence of the natural leader of the county. The enthusiasm of the hunting-field burst forth. They gave him three ringing cheers, and jostled their horses forward that they might grasp his hand.

The park-gates were open, and the postilions dashed along through scenes of loveliness on which Lothair would fain have lingered, but he consoled himself with the recollection that he should probably have an opportunity of seeing them again. Sometimes his carriage seemed in the heart of an ancient forest; sometimes the deer, startled at his approach, were scudding over expanding lawns; then his course wound by the margin of a sinuous lake with green islands and golden gondolas; and then, after advan-

cing through stately avenues, he arrived at mighty gates of wondrous workmanship, that once had been the boast of a celebrated convent on the Danube, but which, in the days of revolutions, had reached England, and had been obtained by the grandfather of Lothair to guard the choice demesne that was the vicinage of his castle.

When we remember that Lothair, notwithstanding his rank and vast wealth, had never, from the nature of things, been the master of an establishment, it must be admitted that the present occasion was a little trying for his nerves. The whole household of the Towers were arrayed and arranged in groups on the steps of the chief entrance. The steward of the estate, who had been one of the cavalcade, had galloped on before, and he was of course the leading spirit, and extended his arm to his lord as Lothair descended from his carriage. The house-steward, the chief butler, the head-gardener, the chief of the kitchen, the head-keeper, the head-forester, and grooms of the stud and of the chambers, formed one group behind the housekeeper, a grave and distinguished-looking female, who curtseyed like the old court; half a dozen powdered gentlemen, glowing in crimson liveries, indicated the presence of my lord's footmen; while the rest of the household, considerable in numbers, were arranged in two groups, according to their sex, and at a respectful distance.

What struck Lothair (who was always thinking, and who had no inconsiderable fund of humour in his sweet and innocent nature) was the wonderful circumstance that after so long an interval of neglect and abeyance, he should find himself the master of so complete and consummate a household.

'Castles and parks,' he thought, 'I had a right to count on, and, perhaps, even pictures, but how I came to possess such a work of art as my groom of the chambers, who seems as respectfully haughty and as calmly graceful as if he were at Brentham itself, and whose coat must have been made in Saville Row, quite bewilders me.'

But Lothair, though he appreciated Putney Giles, had not yet formed a full conception of the resource and all-accomplished providence of that wondrous man, acting under the inspiration of the consummate Apollonia.

Passing through the entrance hall, a lofty chamber though otherwise of moderate dimensions, Lothair was ushered into his armoury, a gallery two hundred feet long, with suits of complete mail ranged on each side, and the walls otherwise covered with rare and curious weapons. It was impossible, even for the master of this collection, to suppress the delight and the surprise with which he beheld the scene. We must remember, in his excuse, that he beheld it for the first time.

The armoury led to a large and lofty octagonal chamber, highly decorated, in the centre of which was the tomb of Lothair's grandfather. He had raised it in his lifetime. The tomb was of alabaster surrounded by a railing of pure gold, and crowned with a recumbent figure of the deceased in his coronet; a fanciful man, who lived in solitude, building castles and making gardens.

What charmed Lothair most as he proceeded were the number of courts and quadrangles in the castle, all of bright and fantastic architecture, and each of which was a garden, glowing with brilliant colours,

and gay with the voice of fountains or the forms of gorgeous birds. Our young friend did not soon weary in his progress; even the suggestions of the steward, that his lordship's luncheon was at command, did not restrain him. Ball-rooms, and baronial halls, and long libraries with curiously stained windows, and suites of dazzling saloons where he beheld the original portraits of his parents of which he had miniatures; he saw them all, and was pleased and interested. But what most struck and even astonished him was the habitable air which pervaded the whole of this enormous structure; too rare even when families habitually reside in such dwellings; but almost inconceivable, when it was to be remembered that more than a generation had passed without a human being living in these splendid chambers, scarcely a human word being spoken in them. There was not a refinement of modern furniture that was wanting; even the tables were covered with the choicest publications of the day.

'Mr. Putney Giles proposes to arrive here to-morrow,' said the steward. 'He thought your lordship would like to be a day or two alone.'

'He is the most sensible man I know,' said Lothair; 'he always does the right thing. I think I will have my luncheon now, Mr. Harvey, and I will go over the cellars to-morrow.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Lothair's Perplexities.

ES; Lothair wished to be alone. He had naturally a love of solitude, but the events of the last few hours lent an additional inducement to meditation. He was impressed, in a manner and degree not before experienced, with the greatness of his inheritance. His worldly position, until to-day, had been an abstraction. After all, he had only been one of a crowd, which he resembled. But the sight of this proud and abounding territory, and the unexpected encounter with his neighbours, brought to him a sense of power and of responsibility. He shrank from neither. The world seemed opening to him with all its delights, and with him duty was one. He was also sensible of the beautiful, and the surrounding forms of nature and art charmed him. Let us not forget that extreme youth and perfect health were ingredients not wanting in the spell any more than power or wealth. Was it, then, complete? Not without the influence of woman.

To that gentle yet mystical sway the spirit of Lothair had yielded. What was the precise character of his feelings to Theodora, what were his hopes or

views, he had hitherto had neither the time nor the inclination to make certain. The present was so delightful, and the enjoyment of her society had been so constant and complete, that he had ever driven the future from his consideration. Had the conduct of Theodora been different, had she deigned to practise on his affections, appealed to his sensibility, stimulated or piqued his vanity, it might have been otherwise. In the distraction of his heart, or the disturbance of his temper, he might have arrived at conclusions, and even expressed them, incompatible with the exquisite and even sublime friendship, which had so strangely and beautifully arisen, like a palace in a dream, and absorbed his being. Although their acquaintance could hardly be numbered by months, there was no living person of whom he had seen so much, or to whom he had opened his heart and mind with such profuse ingenuousness. Nor on her part, though apparently shrinking from egotism, had there ever been any intellectual reserve. On the contrary, although never authoritative, and even when touching on her convictions, suggesting rather than dictating them, Lothair could not but feel that during the happy period he had passed in her society, not only his taste had refined but his mind had considerably opened; his views had become larger, his sympathies had expanded; he considered with charity things and even persons from whom a year ago he would have recoiled with alarm or aversion.

The time during which Theodora had been his companion was the happiest period of his life. It was more than that; he could conceive no felicity greater, and all that he desired was that it should endure. Since they first met, scarcely four-and-twenty

hours had passed without his being in her presence; and now, notwithstanding the novelty and the variety of the objects around him, and the vast, and urgent, and personal interest which they involved, he felt a want which meeting her, or the daily prospect of meeting her, could alone supply. Her voice lingered in his ear; he gazed upon a countenance invisible to others; and he scarcely saw or did anything without almost unconsciously associating with it her opinion or approbation.

Well, then, the spell was complete. The fitfulness or melancholy which so often are the doom of youth, however otherwise favoured, who do not love, were not the condition, capricious or desponding, of Lothair. In him combined all the accidents and feelings which enchant existence.

He had been rambling in the solitudes of his park, and had thrown himself on the green shadow of a stately tree, his cheek resting on his arm, and lost in reverie amid the deep and sultry silence. Wealthy and young, noble and full of noble thoughts, with the inspiration of health, surrounded by the beautiful, and his heart softened by feelings as exquisite, Lothair, nevertheless, could not refrain from pondering over the mystery of that life which seemed destined to bring to him only delight.

'Life would be perfect,' he at length exclaimed, 'if it would only last.' But it will not last; and what then? He could not reconcile interest in this life with the conviction of another, and an eternal one. It seemed to him that, with such a conviction, man could have only one thought and one occupation, the future, and preparation for it. With such a conviction, what they called reality appeared to him more

vain and nebulous than the scenes and sights of sleep. And he had that conviction; at least he had it once. Had he it now? Yes; he had it now, but modified perhaps; in detail. He was not so confident as he was a few months ago that he could be ushered by a Jesuit from his deathbed to the society of St. Michael and all the angels. There might be long processes of initiation, intermediate states of higher probation and refinement. There might be a horrible and apathetic pause. When millions of ages appeared to be necessary to mature the crust of a rather insignificant planet, it might be presumption in man to assume that his soul, though immortal, was to reach its final destination regardless of all the influences of space and time.

And the philosophers and distinguished men of science with whom of late he had frequently enjoyed the opportunity of becoming acquainted, what were their views? They differed among themselves: did any of them agree with him? How they accounted for everything except the only point on which man requires revelation! Chance, necessity, atomic theories, nebular hypotheses, development, evolution, the origin of worlds, human ancestry; here were high topics on none of which was there lack of argument; and, in a certain sense, of evidence; and what then? There must be design. The reasoning and the research of all philosophy could not be valid against that conviction. If there were no design, why, it would all be nonsense; and he could not believe in nonsense. And if there were design there must be intelligence; and if intelligence, pure intelligence; and pure intelligence was inconsistent with any disposition but perfect good. But between

the All-wise and the All-benevolent and man, according to the new philosophers, no relations were to be any longer acknowledged. They renounce in despair the possibility of bringing man into connection with that First Cause which they can neither explain nor deny. But man requires that there shall be direct relations between the created and the Creator; and that in those relations he should find a solution of the perplexities of existence. The brain that teems with illimitable thought will never recognise as his creator any power of nature, however irresistible, that is not gifted with consciousness. Atheism may be consistent with fine taste, and fine taste under certain conditions may for a time regulate a polished society; but ethics with atheism are impossible; and without ethics no human order can be strong or permanent.

The Church comes forward, and, without equivocation, offers to establish direct relations between God and man. Philosophy denies its title, and disputes its power. Why? Because they are founded on the supernatural. What is the supernatural? Can there be anything more miraculous than the existence of man and the world? anything more literally supernatural than the origin of things? The Church explains what no one else pretends to explain, and which, everyone agrees, it is of first moment should be made clear.

The clouds of a summer eve were glowing in the creative and flickering blaze of the vanished sun, that had passed like a monarch from the admiring sight, yet left his pomp behind. The golden and umber vapours fell into forms that to the eye of the musing Lothair depicted the objects of his frequent

meditation. There seemed to rise in the horizon the dome and campaniles and lofty aisles of some celestial fane, such as he had often more than dreamed of raising to the revealed Author of life and death. Altars arose and sacred shrines, and delicate chantries and fretted spires; now the flashing phantom of heavenly choirs, and then the dim response of cowled and earthly cenobites:

These are black Vesper's pageants!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Noble Guests.

LOTHAIR was quite glad to see Mr. Putney Giles. That gentleman indeed was an universal favourite. He was intelligent, acquainted with everything except theology and metaphysics, liked to oblige, a little to patronise, never made difficulties, and always overcame them. His bright blue eye, open forehead, and sunny face indicated a man full of resource, and with a temper of natural sweetness.

The lawyer and his noble client had a great deal of business to transact. Lothair was to know his position in detail preparatory to releasing his guardians from their responsibilities, and assuming the management of his own affairs. Mr. Putney Giles was a firstrate man of business. With all his pleasant, easy manner he was precise and methodical, and was not content that his client should be less master of his own affairs than his lawyer. The mornings passed over a table covered with despatch-boxes and piles of ticketed and banded papers, and then they looked after the workmen who were preparing for the impending festivals, or rode over the estate.

'That is our weak point,' said Mr. Putney Giles, pointing to a distant part of the valley. 'We ought to have both sides of the valley. Your lordship will have to consider whether you can devote the 200,000*l.* of the second and extinct trust to a better purpose than in obtaining that estate.'

Lothair had always destined that particular sum for the cathedral, the raising of which was to have been the first achievement of his majority; but he did not reply.

In a few days the guests began to arrive, but gradually. The Duke and Duchess and Lady Corisande came first, and were one day alone with Lothair, for Mr. Putney Giles had departed to fetch Apollonia.

Lothair was unaffectedly gratified at not only receiving his friends at his own castle, but under these circumstances of intimacy. They had been the first persons who had been kind to him, and he really loved the whole family. They arrived rather late, but he would show them to their rooms, and they were choice ones, himself, and then they dined together in the small green dining-room. Nothing could be more graceful or more cordial than the whole affair. The Duchess seemed to beam with affectionate pleasure as Lothair fulfilled his duties as their host; the Duke praised the claret, and he seldom praised anything; while Lady Corisande only regretted that the impending twilight had prevented her from seeing the beautiful country, and expressed lively interest in the morrow's inspection of the castle and domain. Sometimes her eyes met those of Lothair, and she was so happy that she unconsciously smiled.

'And to-morrow,' said Lothair, 'I am delighted to say, we shall have to ourselves; at least all the morn-

ing. We will see the castle first, and then, after luncheon, we will drive about everywhere.'

'Everywhere,' said Corisande.

'It was very nice your asking us first, and alone,' said the Duchess.

'It was very nice you coming, dear Duchess,' said Lothair, 'and most kind, as you ever are to me.'

'Duke of Brecon is coming to you on Thursday,' said the Duke; 'he told me so at White's.'

'Perhaps you would like to know, Duchess, whom you are going to meet,' said Lothair.

'I should much like to hear. Pray tell us.'

'It is a rather formidable array,' said Lothair, and he took out a paper. 'First, there are all the notables of the county. I do not know any of them personally, so I wrote to each of them a letter, as well as sending them a formal invitation. I thought that was right.'

'Quite right,' said the Duchess. 'Nothing could be more proper.'

'Well, the first person, of course, is the Lord Lieutenant. He is coming.'

'By-the-bye, let me see, who is your Lord Lieutenant?' said the Duke.

'Lord Agramont.'

'To be sure. I was at college with him, a very good fellow; but I have never met him since, except once at Boodle's; and I never saw a man so red and grey, and I remember him such a good-looking fellow! He must have lived immensely in the country, and never thought of his person,' said the Duke in a tone of pity, and playing with his moustache.

'Is there a Lady Agramont?' enquired the Duchess.

'Oh yes! and she also honours me with her presence,' said Lothair.

'And who was Lady Agramont?'

'Oh! his cousin,' said the Duke. 'The Agramonts always marry their cousins. His father did the same thing. They are so shy. It is a family that never was in society and never will be. I was at Agramont Castle once when I was at college, and I never shall forget it. We used to sit down forty or fifty every day to dinner, entirely maiden aunts and clergymen, and that sort of thing. However, I shall be truly glad to see Agramont again, for, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, he is a thoroughly good fellow.'

'Then there is the High Sheriff,' continued Lothair; 'and both the county members and their wives; and Mrs. High Sheriff too. I believe there is some tremendous question respecting the precedency of this lady. There is no doubt that, in the county, the High Sheriff takes precedence of everyone, even of the Lord Lieutenant; but how about his wife? Perhaps your Grace could aid me? Mr. Putney Giles said he would write about it to the Heralds' College.'

'I should give her the benefit of any doubt,' said the Duchess.

'And then our Bishop is coming,' said Lothair.

'Oh! I am so glad you have asked the Bishop,' said Lady Corisande.

'There could be no doubt about it,' said Lothair. 'I do not know how his lordship will get on with one of my guardians, the Cardinal; but his Eminence is not here in a priestly character; and, as for that, there is less chance of his differing with the Cardinal

than with my other guardian, Lord Culloden, who is a member of the Free Kirk.'

'Is Lord Culloden coming?' said the Duchess.

'Yes, and with two daughters, Flora and Grizell. I remember my cousins, good-natured little girls, but Mr. Putney Giles tells me that the shortest is six feet high.'

'I think we shall have a very amusing party,' said the Duchess.

'You know all the others,' said Lothair. 'No, by-the-bye, there is the Dean of my college coming, and Monsignore Catesby, a great friend of the St. Jeromes.'

Lady Corisande looked grave.

'The St. Jeromes will be here to-morrow,' continued Lothair, 'and the Montairys and the St. Aldegondes. I have half an idea that Bertram and Carisbrooke and Hugo Bohun will be here to-night; Duke of Brecon on Thursday. And that, I think, is all, except an American lady and gentleman, whom I think you will like; great friends of mine: I knew them this year at Oxford, and they were very kind to me. He is a man of considerable fortune; they have lived at Paris a good deal.'

'I have known Americans who lived at Paris,' said the Duke; 'very good sort of people, and no end of money some of them.'

'I believe Colonel Campian has large estates in the South,' said Lothair; 'but though really I have no right to speak of his affairs, he must have suffered very much.'

'Well, he has the consolation of suffering in a good cause,' said the Duke. 'I shall be happy to make his acquaintance. I look upon an American gentleman with large estates in the South as a real

aristocrat; and whether he gets his rents, or whatever his returns may be, or not, I should always treat him with respect.'

'I have heard the American women are very pretty,' said Lady Corisande.

'Mrs. Campian is very distinguished,' said Lothair; 'but I think she was an Italian.'

'They promise to be an interesting addition to our party,' said the Duchess, and she rose.

CHAPTER XL.

Enchanted Wanderings.

THERE never was anything so successful as the arrangements of the next day. After breakfast they inspected the castle, and in the easiest manner, without form, and without hurry, resting occasionally in a gallery or a saloon, never examining a cabinet, and only looking at a picture now and then. Generally speaking, nothing is more fatiguing than the survey of a great house, but this enterprise was conducted with so much tact and consideration, and much which they had to see was so beautiful and novel, that everyone was interested, and remained quite fresh for their subsequent exertions. 'And then the Duke is so much amused,' said the Duchess to her daughter, delighted at the unusual excitement of the handsome, but somewhat too serene, partner of her life.

After luncheon they visited the gardens, which had been formed in a sylvan valley enclosed with gilded gates. The creator of this paradise had been favoured by nature, and had availed himself of this opportunity. The contrast between the parterres blazing with colour and the sylvan background, the un-

dulating paths over romantic heights, the fanes and the fountains, the glittering statues, and the Babylonian terraces, formed a whole much of which was beautiful, and all of which was striking and singular.

'Perhaps too many temples,' said Lothair, 'but this ancestor of mine had some imagination.'

A carriage met them on the other side of the valley, and then they soon entered the park.

'I am almost as much a stranger here as yourself, dear Duchess,' said Lothair; 'but I have seen some parts which I think will please you.' And they commenced a drive of varying, but unceasing, beauty.

'I hope I shall see the wild cattle,' said Lady Corisande.

Lady Corisande saw the wild cattle, and many other things which gratified and charmed her. It was a long drive, even of hours, and yet no one was for a moment wearied.

'What a delightful day!' Lady Corisande exclaimed in her mother's dressing-room. 'I have never seen any place so beautiful.'

'I agree with you,' said the Duchess; 'but what pleases me most are his manners. They were always kind and natural, but they are so polished, so exactly what they ought to be; and he always says the right thing. I never knew anyone who had so matured.'

'Yes; it is very little more than a year since he came to us at Brentham,' said Lady Corisande thoughtfully. 'Certainly he has greatly changed. I remember he could hardly open his lips; and now I think him very agreeable.'

'He is more than that,' said the Duchess, 'he is interesting.'

'Yes,' said Lady Corisande; 'he is interesting.'

'What delights me,' said the Duchess, 'is to see his enjoyment of his position. He seems to take such an interest in everything. It makes me happy to see him so happy.'

'Well, I hardly know,' said Lady Corisande, 'about that. There is something occasionally about his expression which I should hardly describe as indicative of happiness or content. It would be ungrateful to describe one as *distrait* who seems to watch all one's wants, and hangs on every word; and yet, especially as we returned, and when we were all of us a little silent, there was a remarkable abstraction about him; I caught it once or twice before, earlier in the day; his mind seemed in another place, and anxiously.'

'He has a great deal to think of,' said the Duchess.

'I fear it is that dreadful Monsignore Catesby,' said Lady Corisande with a sigh.

CHAPTER XLI.

Theodora Visits the Towers.

THE arrival of the guests was arranged with judgment. The personal friends came first; the formal visitors were invited only for the day before the public ceremonies commenced. No more dinners in small green dining-rooms. While the Duchess was dressing, Bertha St. Aldegonde and Victoria Montairy, who had just arrived, came in to give her a rapid embrace while their own toilettes were unpacking.

'Granville has come, mamma; I did not think that he would till the last moment. He said he was so afraid of being bored. There is a large party by this train; the St. Jeromes, Bertram, Mr. Bohun, Lord Carisbrooke, and some others we do not know.'

The Cardinal had been expected to-day, but he had telegraphed that his arrival must be postponed in consequence of business until the morrow, which day had been previously fixed for the arrival of his fellow guardian and trustee, the Earl of Culloden, and his daughters, the Ladies Flora and Grizell Falkirk. Monsignore Catesby had, however, arrived by this train, and the persons whom they 'did not know,' the Campians.

Lothair waited on Colonel Campian immediately and welcomed him, but he did not see Theodora. Still he had enquired after her, and left her a message, and hoped that she would take some tea; and thus, as he flattered himself, broken a little the strangeness of their meeting under his roof; but, notwithstanding all this, when she really entered the drawing-room he was seized with such a palpitation of the heart that for a moment he thought he should be unequal to the situation. But the serenity of Theodora reassured him. The Campians came in late, and all eyes were upon them. Lothair presented Theodora to the Duchess, who being prepared for the occasion, said exactly the right thing in the best manner, and invited Mrs. Campian to sit by her, and then Theodora being launched, Lothair whispered something to the Duke, who nodded, and the Colonel was introduced to his Grace. The Duke, always polite but generally cold, was more than courteous; he was cordial; he seemed to enjoy the opportunity of expressing his high consideration for a gentleman of the Southern States.

So the first step was over; Lothair recovered himself; the palpitation subsided; and the world still went on. The Campians had made a good start, and the favourable impression hourly increased. At dinner Theodora sat between Lord St. Jerome and Bertram, and talked more to the middle-aged peer than to the distinguished youth, who would willingly have engrossed her attention. All mothers admire such discretion, especially in a young and beautiful married woman, so the verdict of the evening among the great ladies was, that Theodora was distinguished, and that all she said or did was in good taste. On the plea of

her being a foreigner, she was at once admitted into a certain degree of social intimacy. Had she had the misfortune of being native-born and had flirted with Bertram, she would probably, particularly with so much beauty, have been looked upon as 'a horrid woman,' and have been relegated for amusement, during her visit, to the attentions of the dark sex. But, strange to say, the social success of Colonel Campian was not less eminent than that of his distinguished wife. The character which the Duke gave of him commanded universal sympathy. 'You know he is a gentleman,' said the Duke; 'he is not a Yankee. People make the greatest mistakes about these things. He is a gentleman of the South; they have no property but land; and I am told his territory was immense. He always lived at Paris and in the highest style, disgusted of course with his own country. It is not unlikely he may have lost his estates now; but that makes no difference to me. I shall treat him, and all other Southern gentlemen, as our fathers treated the emigrant nobility of France.'

'Hugo,' said St. Aldegonde to Mr. Bohun, 'I wish you would tell Bertha to come to me. I want her. She is talking to a lot of women at the other end of the room, and, if I go to her, I am afraid they will get hold of me.'

The future Duchess, who lived only to humour her lord, was at his side in an instant. 'You wanted me, Granville?'

'Yes; you know I was afraid, Bertha, I should be bored here. I am not bored. I like this American fellow. He understands the only two subjects which interest me; horses and tobacco.'

'I am charmed, Granville, that you are not bored; I told mamma that you were very much afraid you would be.'

'Yes; but I tell you what, Bertha, I cannot stand any of the ceremonies. I shall go before they begin. Why cannot Lothair be content with receiving his friends in a quiet way? It is all humbug about the county. If he wants to do something for the county, he can build a wing to the infirmary, or something of that sort, and not bore us with speeches and fireworks. It is a sort of thing I cannot stand.'

'And you shall not, dear Granville. The moment you are bored, you shall go. Only you are not bored at present.'

'Not at present; but I expected to be.'

'Yes; so I told mamma; but that makes the present more delightful.'

The St. Jeromes were going to Italy and immediately. Their departure had only been postponed in order that they might be present at the majority of Lothair. Miss Arundel had at length succeeded in her great object. They were to pass the winter at Rome. Lord St. Jerome was quite pleased at having made the acquaintance at dinner of a Roman lady, who spoke English so perfectly; and Lady St. Jerome, who in consequence fastened upon Theodora, was getting into ecstasies, which would have been embarrassing had not her new acquaintance skilfully checked her.

'We must be satisfied that we both admire Rome,' said Mrs. Campian, 'though we admire it for different reasons. Although a Roman, I am not a Roman Catholic; and Colonel Campian's views on Italian affairs generally would, I fear, not entirely agree with Lord St. Jerome's.'

'Naturally,' said Lady St. Jerome, gracefully dropping the subject, and remembering that Colonel Campian was a citizen of the United States, which accounted in her apprehension for his peculiar opinions.

Lothair, who had been watching his opportunity the whole evening, approached Theodora. He meant to have expressed his hope that she was not wearied by her journey, but instead of that he said, 'Your presence here makes me inexpressibly happy.'

'I think everybody seems happy to be your guest,' she replied, parrying, as was her custom, with a slight kind smile, and a low, sweet, unembarrassed voice, any personal allusion from Lothair of unusual energy or ardour.

'I wanted to meet you at the station to-day,' he continued, 'but there were so many people coming that——' and he hesitated.

'It would really have been more embarrassing to us than to yourself,' she said. 'Nothing could be better than all the arrangements.'

'I sent my own brougham for you,' said Lothair. 'I hope there was no mistake about it.'

'None: your servant gave us your kind message; and as for the carriage it was too delightful. Colonel Campian was so pleased with it that he has promised to give me one, with your permission, exactly the same.'

'I wish you would accept the one you used to-day.'

'You are too magnificent; you really must try to forget, with us, that you are the lord of Muriel Towers. But I will willingly use your carriages as much as you please, for I caught glimpses of beauty

to-day in our progress from the station that made me anxious to explore your delightful domain.'

There was a slight burst of merriment from a distant part of the room, and everybody looked around. Colonel Campian had been telling a story to a group formed of the Duke, St. Aldegonde, and Mr. Bohun.

'Best story I ever heard in my life,' exclaimed St. Aldegonde, who prided himself when he did laugh, which was rare, on laughing loud. But even the Duke tittered, and Hugo Bohun smiled.

'I am glad to see the Colonel get on so well with everyone,' said Lothair; 'I was afraid he might have been bored.'

'He does not know what that means,' said Theodora; 'and he is so natural and so sweet-tempered, and so intelligent, that it seems to me he always is popular.'

'Do you think that will be a match?' said Monsignore Catesby to Miss Arundel.

'Well, I rather believe in the Duke of Brecon,' she replied. They were referring to Lord Carisbrooke, who appeared to be devoted to Lady Corisande. 'Do you admire the American lady?'

'Who is an Italian, they tell me, though she does not look like one. What do you think of her?' said the Monsignore, evading, as was his custom, a direct reply.

'Well, I think she is very distinguished—unusual. I wonder where our host became acquainted with them? Do you know?'

'Not yet; but I dare say Mr. Bohun can tell us;' and he addressed that gentleman accordingly as he was passing by.

'Not the most remote idea,' said Mr. Bohun.

'You know the Colonel is not a Yankee; he is a tremendous swell. The Duke says with more land than he has.'

'He seems an agreeable person,' said Miss Arundel.

'Well, he tells anecdotes; he has just been telling one; Granville likes anecdotes; they amuse him, and he likes to be amused: that is all he cares about. I hate anecdotes, and I always get away when conversation falls into what Pinto calls its anecdotage.'

'You do not like to be amused?'

'Not too much; I like to be interested.'

'Well,' said Miss Arundel, 'so long as a person can talk agreeably, I am satisfied. I think to talk well a rare gift; quite as rare as singing: and yet you expect everyone to be able to talk, and very few to be able to sing.'

'There are amusing people who do not interest,' said the Monsignore, 'and interesting people who do not amuse. What I like is an agreeable person.'

'My idea of an agreeable person,' said Hugo Bohun, 'is a person who agrees with me.'

'Talking of singing, something is going to happen,' said Miss Arundel.

A note was heard; a celebrated professor had entered the room and was seated at the piano which he had just touched. There was a general and unconscious hush, and the countenance of Lord St. Aldegonde wore a rueful expression. But affairs turned out better than could be anticipated. A young and pretty girl, dressed in white with a gigantic sash of dazzling beauty, played upon the violin with a grace, and sentiment, and marvellous skill, and passionate expression, worthy of St. Cecilia. She was a

Hungarian lady, and this was her English début. Everybody praised her, and everybody was pleased; and Lord St. Aldegonde, instead of being bored, took a wondrous rose out of his buttonhole and presented it to her.

The performance only lasted half an hour, and then the ladies began to think of their bowers. Lady St. Aldegonde, before she quitted the room, was in earnest conversation with her lord.

'I have arranged all that you wished, Granville,' she said, speaking rapidly and holding a candlestick. 'We are to see the castle to-morrow, and the gardens and the parks and everything else, but you are not to be bored at all, and not to lose your shooting. The moors are sixteen miles off, but our host says, with an omnibus and a good team (and he will give you a firstrate one), you can do it in an hour and ten minutes, certainly an hour and a quarter; and you are to make your own party in the smoking-room to-night, and take a capital luncheon with you.'

'All right: I shall ask the Yankee; and I should like to take that Hungarian girl too, if she would only fiddle to us at luncheon.'

CHAPTER XLII.

Three Graces.

NEXT day the Cardinal, with his secretary and his chaplain, arrived. Monsignore Catesby received his Eminence at the station, and knelt and kissed his hand as he stepped from the carriage. The Monsignore had wonderfully manœuvred that the whole of the household should have been marshalled to receive this Prince of the Church, and perhaps have performed the same ceremony: no religious recognition, he assured them, in the least degree involved, only an act of not unusual respect to a foreign Prince; but considering that the Bishop of the diocese and his suite were that day expected, to say nothing of the Presbyterian guardian probably arriving by the same train, Lothair would not be persuaded to sanction any ceremony whatever. Lady St. Jerome and Miss Arundel, however, did their best to compensate for this omission with reverences which a posture-master might have envied, and certainly would not have surpassed. They seemed to sink into the earth, and then slowly and supernaturally to emerge. The Bishop had been at college with the Cardinal and intimate with him,

though they now met for the first time since his secession: a not uninteresting rencounter. The Bishop was High-Church, and would not himself have made a bad cardinal, being polished and plausible, well-lettered, yet quite a man of the world. He was fond of society, and justified his taste in this respect by the flattering belief that by his presence he was extending the power of the Church; certainly favouring an ambition which could not be described as being moderate. The Bishop had no abstract prejudice against gentlemen who wore red hats, and under ordinary circumstances would have welcomed his brother churchman with unaffected cordiality, not to say sympathy; but in the present instance, however gracious his mien and honeyed his expressions, he only looked upon the Cardinal as a dangerous rival, intent upon clutching from his fold the most precious of his flock, and he had long looked to this occasion as the one which might decide the spiritual welfare and career of Lothair. The odds were not to be despised.

There were two Monsignores present besides the Cardinal, but the Bishop was a man of contrivance and resolution, not easily disheartened or defeated. Nor was he without allies. He did not count much on the University don who was to arrive on the morrow in the shape of the head of an Oxford house, though he was a don of magnitude. This eminent personage had already let Lothair slip from his influence. But the Bishop had a subtle counsellor in his chaplain, who wore as good a cassock as any Monsignore, and he brought with him also a trusty archdeacon in a purple coat, whose countenance was quite entitled to a place in the Acta Sanctorum.

It was amusing to observe the elaborate courtesy and more than Christian kindness which the rival prelates and their official followers extended to each other. But under all this unction on both sides were unceasing observation, and a vigilance that never flagged; and on both sides there was an uneasy but irresistible conviction that they were on the eve of one of the decisive battles of the social world. Lord Culloden also at length appeared with his daughters, Ladies Flora and Grizell. They were quite as tall as Mr. Putney Giles had reported, but very pretty, with radiant complexions, sunny blue eyes, and flaxen locks. Their dimples and white shoulders and small feet and hands were much admired. Mr. Giles also returned with Apollonia; and at length also appeared the rival of Lord Carisbrooke, his Grace of Brecon.

Lothair had passed a happy morning, for he had contrived, without difficulty, to be the companion of Theodora during the greater part of it. As the Duchess and Lady Corisande had already inspected the castle, they disappeared after breakfast to write letters; and when the after-luncheon expedition took place, Lothair allotted them to the care of Lord Carisbrooke, and himself became the companion of Lady St. Jerome and Theodora.

Notwithstanding all his efforts in the smoking-room, St. Aldegonde had only been able to induce Colonel Campian to be his companion in the shooting expedition, and the Colonel fell into the lure only through his carelessness and good-nature. He much doubted the discretion of his decision as he listened to Lord St. Aldegonde's reasons for the expedition in their rapid journey to the moors.

'I do not suppose,' he said, 'we shall have any good sport; but when you are in Scotland and come to me, as I hope you will, I will give you something you will like. But it is a great thing to get off seeing the Towers, and the gardens, and all that sort of thing. Nothing bores me so much as going over a man's house. Besides, we get rid of the women.'

The meeting between the two guardians did not promise to be as pleasant as that between the Bishop and the Cardinal, but the crusty Lord Culloden was scarcely a match for the social dexterity of his Eminence. The Cardinal, crossing the room, with winning ceremony, approached and addressed his colleague.

'We can have no more controversies, my lord, for our reign is over;' and he extended a delicate hand, which the surprised peer touched with a huge finger.

'Yes; it all depends on himself now,' replied Lord Culloden with a grim smile; 'and I hope he will not make a fool of himself.'

'What have you got for us to-night?' enquired Lothair of Mr. Giles, as the gentlemen rose from the dining table.

Mr. Giles said he would consult his wife, but Lothair, observing he would himself undertake that office, when he entered the saloon addressed Apollonia. Nothing could be more skilful than the manner in which Mrs. Giles in this party assumed precisely the position which equally became her and suited her own views; at the same time the somewhat humble friend, but the trusted counsellor, of the Towers, she disarmed envy and conciliated consideration. Never obtrusive, yet always prompt and prepared with unfailing resource, and gifted apparently with universal

talents, she soon became the recognised medium by which everything was suggested or arranged; and before eight-and-forty hours had passed she was described by Duchesses and their daughters as 'that dear Mrs. Giles.'

'Monsieur Raphael and his sister came down in the train with us,' said Mrs. Giles to Lothair; 'the rest of the troupe will not be here until to-morrow; but they told me they could give you a perfect *proverbe* if your lordship would like it; and the Spanish conjuror is here; but I rather think, from what I gather, that the young ladies would like a dance.'

'I do not much fancy acting the moment these great churchmen have arrived, and with Cardinals and Bishops I would rather not have dances the first night. I almost wish we had kept the Hungarian lady for this evening.'

'Shall I send for her? she is ready.'

'The repetition would be too soon, and would show a great poverty of resources,' said Lothair smiling; 'what we want is some singing.'

'Mardoni ought to have been here to-day,' said Mrs. Giles; 'but he never keeps his engagements.'

'I think our amateur materials are rather rich,' said Lothair.

'There is Mrs. Campian,' said Apollonia in a low voice, but Lothair shook his head.

'But perhaps if others set her the example,' he added after a pause; 'Lady Corisande is firstrate, and all her sisters sing; I will go and consult the Duchess.'

There was soon a stir in the room. Lady St. Aldegonde and her sisters approached the piano at which was seated the eminent professor. A note was heard,

and there was silence. The execution was exquisite; and indeed there are few things more dainty than the blended voices of three women. No one seemed to appreciate the performance more than Mrs. Campian, who, greatly attracted by what was taking place, turned a careless ear even to the honeyed sentences of no less a personage than the Lord Bishop.

After an interval Lady Corisande was handed to the piano by Lothair. She was in fine voice and sang with wonderful effect. Mrs. Campian, who seemed much interested, softly rose and stole to the outward circle of the group which had gathered round the instrument. When the sounds had ceased, amid the general applause her voice of admiration was heard. The Duchess approached her, evidently prompted by the general wish, and expressed her hope that Mrs. Campian would now favour them. It was not becoming to refuse when others had contributed so freely to the general entertainment, but Theodora was anxious not to place herself in competition with those who had preceded her. Looking over a volume of music she suggested to Lady Corisande a duet in which the peculiarities of their two voices, which in character were quite different, one being a soprano and the other a contralto, might be displayed. And very seldom in a private chamber had anything of so high a class been heard. Not a lip moved except those of the singers, so complete was the fascination, till the conclusion elicited a burst of irresistible applause.

'In imagination I am throwing endless bouquets,' said Hugo Bohun.

'I wish we could induce her to give us a recitation from Alfieri,' said Mrs. Putney Giles in a

whisper to Lady St. Aldegonde. 'I heard it once; it was the finest thing I ever listened to.'

'But cannot we?' said Lady St. Aldegonde.

Apollonia shook her head. 'She is extremely reserved. I am quite surprised that she sang; but she could not well refuse after your ladyship and your sisters had been so kind.'

'But if the lord of the Towers asks her,' suggested Lady St. Aldegonde.

'No, no,' said Mrs. Giles, 'that would not do; nor would he. He knows she dislikes it. A word from Colonel Campian and the thing would be settled; but it is rather absurd to invoke the authority of a husband for so light a matter.'

'I should like so much to hear her,' said Lady St. Aldegonde. 'I think I will ask her myself. I will go and speak to mamma.'

There was much whispering and consulting in the room, but unnoticed, as general conversation had now been resumed. The Duchess sent for Lothair and conferred with him; but Lothair seemed to shake his head. Then her Grace rose and approached Colonel Campian, who was talking to Lord Culloden, and then the Duchess and Lady St. Aldegonde went to Mrs. Campian. Then, after a short time, Lady St. Aldegonde rose and fetched Lothair.

'Her Grace tells me,' said Theodora, 'that Colonel Campian wishes me to give a recitation. I cannot believe that such a performance can ever be generally interesting, especially in a foreign language, and I confess that I would rather not exhibit. But I do not like to be churlish when all are so amiable and compliant, and the Duchess tells me that it cannot well be postponed, for this is the last quiet night we

shall have. What I want is a screen, and I must be a moment alone before I venture on these enterprises. I require it to create the ideal presence.'

Lothair and Bertram arranged the screen, the Duchess and Lady St. Aldegonde glided about, and tranquilly intimated what was going to occur, so that, without effort, there was in a moment complete silence and general expectation. Almost unnoticed Mrs. Campian had disappeared, whispering a word as she passed to the eminent conductor, who was still seated at the piano. The company had almost unconsciously grouped themselves in the form of a theatre, the gentlemen generally standing behind the ladies who were seated. There were some bars of solemn music, and then to an audience not less nervous than herself, Theodora came forward as Electra in that beautiful appeal to Clytemnestra, where she veils her mother's guilt even while she intimates her more than terrible suspicion of its existence, and makes one last desperate appeal of pathetic duty in order to save her parent and her fated house:

> O amata madre,
> Che fai? Non credo io, no, che ardente fiamma
> Il cor ti avvampi.

The ineffable grace of her action, simple without redundancy, her exquisite elocution, her deep yet controlled passion, and the magic of a voice thrilling even in a whisper, this form of Phidias with the genius of Sophocles, entirely enraptured a fastidious audience. When she ceased, there was an outburst of profound and unaffected appreciation; and Lord St. Aldegonde, who had listened in a sort of ecstasy, rushed forward, with a countenance as serious as the

theme, to offer his thanks and express his admiration.

And then they gathered around her, all these charming women and some of these admiring men, as she would have resumed her seat, and entreated her once more, only once more, to favour them. She caught the adoring glance of the lord of the Towers, and her eyes seemed to enquire what she should do. 'There will be many strangers here to-morrow,' said Lothair, 'and next week all the world. This is a delight only for the initiated,' and he entreated her to gratify them.

'It shall be Alfieri's ode to America then,' said Theodora, 'if you please.'

'She is a Roman, I believe,' said Lady St. Jerome to his Eminence, 'but not, alas! a child of the Church. Indeed I fear her views generally are advanced,' and she shook her head.

'At present,' said the Cardinal, 'this roof and this visit may influence her. I should like to see such powers engaged in the cause of God.'

The Cardinal was an entire believer in female influence, and a considerable believer in his influence over females; and he had good cause for his convictions. The catalogue of his proselytes was numerous and distinguished. He had not only converted a duchess and several countesses, but he had gathered into his fold a real Mary Magdalen. In the height of her beauty and her fame, the most distinguished member of the demi-monde had suddenly thrown up her golden whip and jingling reins, and cast herself at the feet of the Cardinal. He had a right, therefore, to be confident; and while his exquisite taste and consummate cultivation rendered it impossible

that he should not have been deeply gratified by the performance of Theodora, he was really the whole time considering the best means by which such charms and powers could be enlisted in the cause of the Church.

After the ladies had retired, the gentlemen talked for a few minutes over the interesting occurrence of the evening.

'Do you know,' said the Bishop to the Duke and some surrounding auditors, 'fine as was the Electra, I preferred the ode to the tragedy. There was a tumult of her brow, especially in the address to Liberty, that was sublime — quite a Mœnad look.'

'What do you think of it, Carry?' said St. Aldegonde to Lord Carisbrooke.

'Brecon says she puts him in mind of Ristori.'

'She is not in the least like Ristori, or anyone else,' said St. Aldegonde. 'I never heard, I never saw anyone like her. I'll tell you what: you must take care what you say about her in the smoking-room, for her husband will be there, and an excellent fellow too. We went together to the moors this morning, and he did not bore me in the least. Only, if I had known as much about his wife as I do now, I would have stayed at home, and passed my morning with the women.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

Mysterious Hints.

ST. ALDEGONDE loved to preside over the mysteries of the smoking-room. There, enveloped in his Egyptian robe, occasionally blurting out some careless or headstrong paradox to provoke discussion among others, which would amuse himself, rioting in a Rabelaisian anecdote, and listening with critical delight to endless memoirs of horses and prima donnas, St. Aldegonde was never bored. Sometimes, too, when he could get hold of an eminent traveller, or some individual distinguished for special knowledge, St. Aldegonde would draw him out with skill, himself displaying an acquaintance with the particular topic which often surprised his habitual companions, for St. Aldegonde professed never to read; but he had no ordinary abilities, and an original turn of mind and habit of life, which threw him in the way of unusual persons of all classes, from whom he imbibed or extracted a vast variety of queer, always amusing, and not altogether useless, information.

'Lothair has only one weakness,' he said to Colonel Campian as the ladies disappeared; 'he does not smoke. Carry, you will come?'

'Well, I do not think I shall to-night,' said Lord Carisbrooke. Lady Corisande, it appears, particularly disapproved of smoking.

'Hum!' said St. Aldegonde; 'Duke of Brecon I know will come, and Hugo and Bertram. My brother Montairy would give his ears to come, but is afraid of his wife; and then there is the Monsignore, a most capital fellow, who knows everything.'

There were other gatherings before the midnight bell struck at the Towers which discussed important affairs, though they might not sit so late as the smoking-party. Lady St. Aldegonde had a reception in her room as well as her lord. There the silent observation of the evening found avenging expression in sparkling criticism; and the summer lightning, though it generally blazed with harmless brilliancy, occasionally assumed a more arrowy character. The gentlemen of the smoking-room have it not all their own way quite as much as they think. If, indeed, a new school of Athens were to be pictured, the sages and the students might be represented in exquisite dressing-gowns, with slippers rarer than the lost one of Cinderella, and brandishing beautiful brushes over tresses still more fair. Then is the time when characters are never more finely drawn, or difficult social questions more accurately solved; knowledge without reasoning, and truth without logic: the triumph of intuition! But we must not profane the mysteries of Bona Dea.

The archdeacon and the chaplain had also been in council with the Bishop in his dressing-room, who, while he dismissed them with his benison, repeated his apparently satisfactory assurance, that something would happen 'the first thing after breakfast.'

Lothair did not smoke, but he did not sleep. He was absorbed by the thought of Theodora. He could not but be conscious, and so far he was pleased by the consciousness, that she was as fascinating to others as to himself. What then? Even with the splendid novelty of his majestic home, and all the excitement of such an incident in his life, and the immediate prospect of their again meeting, he had felt, and even acutely, their separation. Whether it were the admiration of her by others which proved his own just appreciation, or whether it were the unobtrusive display of exquisite accomplishments, which with all their intimacy she had never forced on his notice; whatever the cause, her hold upon his heart and life, powerful as it was before, had strengthened. Lothair could not conceive existence tolerable without her constant presence; and with her constant presence existence would be rapture. It had come to that. All his musings, all his profound investigation and high resolve, all his sublime speculations on God and man, and life and immortality, and the origin of things, and religious truth, ended in an engrossing state of feeling, which could be denoted in that form and in no other.

What, then, was his future? It seemed dark and distressing. Her constant presence his only happiness; her constant presence impossible. He seemed on an abyss.

In eight-and-forty hours or so one of the chief provinces of England would be blazing with the celebration of his legal accession to his high estate. If anyone in the Queen's dominions had to be fixed upon as the most fortunate and happiest of her subjects, it might well be Lothair. If happiness depend

on lofty stations, his ancient and hereditary rank was of the highest; if, as there seems no doubt, the chief source of felicity in this country is wealth, his vast possessions and accumulated treasure could not easily be rivalled, while he had a matchless advantage over those who pass, or waste, their grey and withered lives in acquiring millions, in his consummate and healthy youth. He had bright abilities, and a brighter heart. And yet the unknown truth was, that this favoured being, on the eve of this critical event, was pacing his chamber agitated and infinitely disquieted, and struggling with circumstances and feelings over which alike he seemed to have no control, and which seemed to have been evoked without the exercise of his own will, or that of any other person.

'I do not think I can blame myself,' he said; 'and I am sure I cannot blame her. And yet——'

He opened his window and looked upon the moonlit garden, which filled the fanciful quadrangle. The light of the fountain seemed to fascinate his eye and the music of its fall soothed him into reverie. The distressful images that had gathered round his heart gradually vanished, and all that remained to him was the reality of his happiness. Her beauty and her grace, the sweet stillness of her searching intellect, and the refined pathos of her disposition only occurred to him, and he dwelt on them with spellbound joy.

The great clock of the Towers sounded two.

'Ah!' said Lothair, 'I must try to sleep. I have got to see the Bishop to-morrow morning. I wonder what he wants.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

Priestly Plots.

THE Bishop was particularly playful on the morrow at breakfast. Though his face beamed with Christian kindness, there was a twinkle in his eye which seemed not entirely superior to mundane self-complacency, even to a sense of earthly merriment. His seraphic raillery elicited sympathetic applause from the ladies, especially from the daughters of the house of Brentham, who laughed occasionally even before his angelic jokes were well launched. His lambent flashes sometimes even played over the Cardinal, whose cerulean armour, nevertheless, remained always unscathed. Monsignore Chidiock, however, who would once unnecessarily rush to the aid of his chief, was tumbled over by the Bishop with relentless gaiety, to the infinite delight of Lady Corisande, who only wished it had been that dreadful Monsignore Catesby. But, though less demonstrative, apparently not the least devout of his lordship's votaries were the Lady Flora and the Lady Grizell. These young gentlewomen, though apparently gifted with appetites becoming their ample but far from graceless forms, contrived to satisfy all the wants of nature without taking their charmed vision for a moment off the prelate, or los-

ing a word which escaped his consecrated lips. Sometimes even they ventured to smile, and then they looked at their father and sighed. It was evident, notwithstanding their appetites and their splendid complexions, which would have become the Aurora of Guido, that these young ladies had some secret sorrow which required a confidante. Their visit to Muriel Towers was their introduction to society, for the elder had only just attained sweet seventeen. Young ladies under these circumstances always fall in love, but with their own sex. Lady Flora and Lady Grizell both fell in love with Lady Corisande, and before the morning had passed away she had become their friend and counsellor, and the object of their devoted adoration. It seems that their secret sorrow had its origin in that mysterious religious sentiment which agitates or affects every class and condition of man, and which creates or destroys states, though philosophers are daily assuring us 'that there is nothing in it.'

The fair daughters of the Earl of Culloden could not stand any longer the Free Kirk, of which their austere parent was a fiery votary. It seems that they had been secretly converted to the Episcopal Church of Scotland by a governess, who pretended to be a daughter of the Covenant, but who was really a niece of the Primus, and, as Lord Culloden acutely observed, when he ignominiously dismissed her, 'a Jesuit in disguise.' From that moment there had been no peace in his house. His handsome and gigantic daughters, who had hitherto been all meekness, and who had obeyed him as they would a tyrant father of the feudal ages, were resolute, and would not compromise their souls. Thev humbly expressed

their desire to enter a convent, or to become at least sisters of mercy. Lord Culloden raged and raved, and delivered himself of cynical taunts, but to no purpose. The principle that forms free kirks is a strong principle, and takes many forms, which the social Polyphemes, who have only one eye, cannot perceive. In his desperate confusion, he thought that change of scene might be a diversion when things were at the worst, and this was the reason that he had, contrary to his original intention, accepted the invitation of his ward.

Lady Corisande was exactly the guide the girls required. They sat on each side of her, each holding her hand, which they frequently pressed to their lips. As her form was slight, though of perfect grace and symmetry, the contrast between herself and her worshippers was rather startling; but her noble brow, full of thought and purpose, the firmness of her chiselled lip, and the rich fire of her glance, vindicated her post as the leading spirit.

They breakfasted in a room which opened on a gallery, and at the other end of the gallery was an apartment similar to the breakfast-room, which was the male morning-room, and where the world could find the newspapers, or join in half-an-hour's talk over the intended arrangements of the day. When the breakfast-party broke up, the Bishop approached Lothair, and looked at him earnestly.

'I am at your lordship's service,' said Lothair, and they quitted the breakfast-room together. Halfway down the gallery they met Monsignore Catesby, who had in his hand a number, just arrived, of a newspaper which was esteemed an Utramontane organ. He bowed as he passed them, with an air

of some exaltation, and the Bishop and he exchanged significant smiles, which, however, meant different things. Quitting the gallery, Lothair led the way to his private apartments; and, opening the door, ushered in the Bishop.

Now what was contained in the Ultramontane organ which apparently occasioned so much satisfaction to Monsignore Catesby? A deftly drawn-up announcement of some important arrangements which had been deeply planned. The announcement would be repeated in all the daily papers, which were hourly expected. The world was informed that his Eminence, Cardinal Grandison, now on a visit at Muriel Towers to his ward, Lothair, would celebrate High Mass on the ensuing Sunday in the city which was the episcopal capital of the Bishop's see, and afterwards preach on the present state of the Church of Christ. As the Bishop must be absent from his cathedral that day, and had promised to preach in the chapel at Muriel, there was something dexterous in thus turning his lordship's flank, and desolating his diocese when he was not present to guard it from the fiery dragon. It was also remarked that there would be an unusual gathering of the Catholic aristocracy for the occasion. The rate of lodgings in the city had risen in consequence. At the end of the paragraph it was distinctly contradicted that Lothair had entered the Catholic Church. Such a statement was declared to be 'premature,' as his guardian the Cardinal would never sanction his taking such a step until he was the master of his own actions; the general impression left by the whole paragraph being, that the world was not to be astonished if the first step of Lothair, on accom-

plishing his majority, was to pursue the very course which was now daintily described as premature.

At luncheon the whole party were again assembled. The newspapers had arrived in the interval and had been digested. Everyone was aware of the Popish plot, as Hugo Bohun called it. The Bishop, however, looked serene and, if not as elate as in the morning, calm and content. He sat by the Duchess, and spoke to her in a low voice and with seriousness. The Monsignori watched every expression.

When the Duchess rose, the Bishop accompanied her into the recess of a window, and she said, 'You may depend upon me; I cannot answer for the Duke. It is not the early rising; he always rises early in the country, but he likes to read his letters before he dresses, and that sort of thing. I think you had better speak to Lady Corisande yourself.'

What had taken place at the interview of the Bishop with Lothair, and what had elicited from the Duchess an assurance that the prelate might depend upon her, generally transpired, in consequence of some confidential communications, in the course of the afternoon. It appeared that the Right Reverend Lord had impressed, and successfully, on Lothair the paramount duty of commencing the day of his majority by assisting in an early celebration of the most sacred rite of the Church. This, in the estimation of the Bishop, though he had not directly alluded to the subject in the interview, but had urged the act on higher grounds, would be a triumphant answer to the insidious and calumnious paragraphs which had circulated during the last six months, and an authentic testimony that Lothair was not going to quit the Church of his fathers.

This announcement, however, produced consternation in the opposite camp. It seemed to more than neutralise the anticipated effect of the programme, and the deftly-conceived paragraph. Monsignore Catesby went about whispering that he feared Lothair was going to overdo it; and considering what he had to go through on Monday, if it were only for considerations of health, an early celebration was inexpedient. He tried the Duchess, about whom he was beginning to hover a good deal, as he fancied she was of an impressionable disposition, and gave some promise of results; but here the ground had been too forcibly preoccupied: then he flew to Lady St. Aldegonde, but he had the mortification of learning from her lips that she herself contemplated being a communicant at the same time. Lady Corisande had been before him. All the energies of that young lady were put forth in order that Lothair should be countenanced on this solemn occasion. She conveyed to the Bishop before dinner the results of her exertions.

'You may count on Albertha St. Aldegonde and Victoria Montairy, and, I think, Lord Montairy also, if she presses him, which she has promised to do. Bertram must kneel by his friend at such a time. I think Lord Carisbrooke may: Duke of Brecon I can say nothing about at present.'

'Lord St. Aldegonde?' said the Bishop.

Lady Corisande shook her head.

There had been a conclave in the Bishop's room before dinner, in which the interview of the morning was discussed.

'It was successful, scarcely satisfactory,' said the Bishop. 'He is a very clever fellow, and knows a great deal. They have got hold of him and he

has all the arguments at his fingers' ends. When I came to the point he began to demur; I saw what was passing through his mind, and I said at once, "'Your views are high: so are mine: so are those of the Church. It is a sacrifice, undoubtedly, in a certain sense. No sound theologian would maintain the simplicity of the elements; but that does not involve the coarse interpretation of the dark ages."'

'Good, good,' said the archdeacon; 'and what is it your lordship did not exactly like?'

'He fenced too much; and he said more than once, and in a manner I did not like, that, whatever were his views as to the Church, he thought he could on the whole conscientiously partake of this rite as administered by the Church of England.'

'Everything depends on this celebration,' said the chaplain; 'after that his doubts and difficulties will disperse.'

'We must do our best that he may be well supported,' said the archdeacon.

'No fear of that,' said the Bishop. 'I have spoken to some of our friends. We may depend on the Duchess and her daughters, all admirable women; and they will do what they can with others. It will be a busy day, but I have expressed my hope that the heads of the household may be able to attend. But the county notables arrive to-day, and I shall make it a point with them, especially the Lord Lieutenant.'

'It should be known,' said the Chaplain. 'I will send a memorandum to the *Guardian*.'

'And *John Bull*,' said the Bishop.

The Lord Lieutenant and Lady Agramont, and their daughter, Lady Ida Alice, arrived to-day; and

the High Sheriff, a manufacturer, a great Liberal who delighted in peers, but whose otherwise perfect felicity to-day was a little marred and lessened by the haunting and restless fear that Lothair was not duly aware that he took precedence of the Lord Lieutenant. Then there were Sir Hamlet Clotworthy, the master of the hounds, and a capital man of business; and the honourable Lady Clotworthy, a haughty dame who ruled her circle with tremendous airs and graces, but who was a little subdued in the empyrean of Muriel Towers. The other county member, Mr. Ardenne, was a refined gentleman and loved the arts. He had an ancient pedigree, and knew everybody else's, which was not always pleasant. What he most prided himself on was being the hereditary owner of a real deer park; the only one, he asserted, in the county. Other persons had parks which had deer in them, but that was quite a different thing. His wife was a pretty woman, and the inspiring genius of archæological societies, who loved their annual luncheon in her Tudor Halls, and illustrated by their researches the deeds and dwellings of her husband's ancient race.

The clergy of the various parishes on the estate all dined at the Towers to-day, in order to pay their respects to their Bishop. 'Lothair's œcumenical council,' said Hugo Bohun, as he entered the crowded room, and looked around him with an air of not ungraceful impertinence. Among the clergy was Mr. Smylie, the brother of Apollonia.

A few years ago, Mr. Putney Giles had not unreasonably availed himself of the position which he so usefully and so honourably filled, to recommend this gentleman to the guardians of Lothair to fill a vacant

benefice. The Reverend Dionysius Smylie had distinguished himself at Trinity College, Dublin, and had gained a Hebrew scholarship there; after that he had written a work on the Revelation, which clearly settled the long-controverted point whether Rome in the great Apocalypse was signified by Babylon. The Bishop shrugged his shoulders when he received Mr. Smylie's papers, the examining chaplain sighed, and the archdeacon groaned. But man is proverbially shortsighted. The doctrine of evolution affords no instances so striking as those of sacerdotal development. Placed under the favouring conditions of clime and soil, the real character of the Rev. Dionysius Smylie gradually, but powerfully, developed itself. Where he now ministered, he was attended by acolytes, and incensed by thurifers. The shoulders of a fellow-countryman were alone equal to the burden of the enormous cross which preceded him; while his ecclesiastical wardrobe furnished him with many coloured garments, suited to every season of the year, and every festival of the Church.

At first there was indignation, and rumours or prophecies that we should soon have another case of perversion, and that Mr. Smylie was going over to Rome; but these superficial commentators misapprehended the vigorous vanity of the man. 'Rome may come to me,' said Mr. Smylie, 'and it is perhaps the best thing it could do. This is the real Church without Romish error.'

The Bishop and his reverend staff, who were at first so much annoyed at the preferment of Mr. Smylie, had now, with respect to him, only one duty, and that was to restrain his exuberant priestliness; but they fulfilled that duty in a kindly and charitable

spirit; and when the Rev. Dionysius Smylie was appointed chaplain to Lothair, the Bishop did not shrug his shoulders, the chaplain did not sigh, nor the archdeacon groan.

The party was so considerable to-day that they dined in the great hall. When it was announced to Lothair that his lordship's dinner was served, and he offered his arm to his destined companion, he looked around, and then, in an audible voice, and with a stateliness becoming such an incident, called upon the High Sheriff to lead the Duchess to the table. Although that eminent personage had been thinking of nothing else for days, and during the last half-hour had felt as a man feels, and can only feel, who knows that some public function is momentarily about to fall to his perilous discharge, he was taken quite aback, changed colour, and lost his head. But the band of Lothair, who were waiting at the door of the apartment to precede the procession to the hall, striking up at this moment 'The Roast Beef of Old England,' reanimated his heart; and following Lothair, and preceding all the other guests down the gallery, and through many chambers, he experienced the proudest moment of a life of struggle, ingenuity, vicissitude, and success.

CHAPTER XLV.

A Pair of Confidantes.

UNDER all this flowing festivity there was already a current of struggle and party passion. Serious thoughts and some anxiety occupied the minds of several of the guests, amid the variety of proffered dishes and sparkling wines, and the subdued strains of delicate music. This disquietude did not touch Lothair. He was happy to find himself in his ancestral hall, surrounded by many whom he respected and by some whom he loved. He was an excellent host, which no one can be who does not combine a good heart with high breeding.

Theodora was rather far from him, but he could catch her grave, sweet countenance at an angle of the table, as she bowed her head to Mr. Ardenne, the county member, who was evidently initiating her in all the mysteries of deer parks. The Cardinal sat near him, winning over, though without apparent effort, the somewhat prejudiced Lady Agramont. His Eminence could converse with more facility than others, for he dined off biscuits and drank only water. Lord Culloden had taken out Lady St. Jerome, who

expended on him all the resources of her impassioned tittle-tattle, extracting only grim smiles; and Lady Corisande had fallen to the happy lot of the Duke of Brecon; according to the fine perception of Clare Arundel (and women are very quick in these discoveries), the winning horse. St. Aldegonde had managed to tumble in between Lady Flora and Lady Grizell, and seemed immensely amused.

The Duke enquired of Lothair how many he could dine in his hall.

'We must dine more than two hundred on Monday,' he replied.

'And now, I should think, we have only a third of that number,' said his Grace. 'It will be a tight fit.'

'Mr. Putney Giles has had a drawing made, and every seat apportioned. We shall just do it.'

'I fear you will have too busy a day on Monday,' said the Cardinal, who had caught up the conversation.

'Well, you know, sir, I do not sit up smoking with Lord St. Aldegonde.'

After dinner, Lady Corisande seated herself by Mrs. Campian. 'You must have thought me very rude,' she said, 'to have left you so suddenly at tea, when the Bishop looked into the room; but he wanted me on a matter of the greatest importance. I must, therefore, ask your pardon. You naturally would not feel on this matter as we all do, or most of us do,' she added with some hesitation; 'being, pardon me, a foreigner, and the question involving national as well as religious feelings;' and then somewhat hurriedly, but with emotion, she detailed to Theodora all that had occurred respecting the early celebration on Monday, and the opposition it was re-

ceiving from the Cardinal and his friends. It was a relief to Lady Corisande thus to express all her feelings on a subject on which she had been brooding the whole day.

'You mistake,' said Theodora quietly, when Lady Corisande had finished. 'I am much interested in what you tell me. I should deplore our friend falling under the influence of the Romish priesthood.'

'And yet there is danger of it,' said Lady Corisande, 'more than danger,' she added in a low but earnest voice. 'You do not know what a conspiracy is going on, and has been going on for months to effect this end. I tremble.'

'That is the last thing I ever do,' said Theodora with a faint sweet smile. 'I hope, but I never tremble.'

'You have seen the announcement in the newspapers to-day?' said Lady Corisande.

'I think if they were certain of their prey they would be more reserved,' said Theodora.

'There is something in that,' said Lady Corisande musingly. 'You know not what a relief it is to me to speak to you on this matter. Mamma agrees with me, and so do my sisters; but still they may agree with me because they are my mamma and my sisters; but I look upon our nobility joining the Church of Rome as the greatest calamity that has ever happened to England. Irrespective of all religious considerations, on which I will not presume to touch, it is an abnegation of patriotism; and in this age, when all things are questioned, a love of our country seems to me the one sentiment to cling to.'

'I know no higher sentiment,' said Theodora in a low voice, and yet which sounded like the breathing

of some divine shrine, and her Athenian eye met the fiery glance of Lady Corisande with an expression of noble sympathy.

'I am so glad that I spoke to you on this matter,' said Lady Corisande, 'for there is something in you which encourages me. As you say, if they were certain they would be silent; and yet, from what I hear, their hopes are high. You know,' she added in a whisper, 'that he has absolutely engaged to raise a Popish Cathedral. My brother, Bertram, has seen the model in his rooms.'

'I have known models that were never realised,' said Theodora.

'Ah! you are hopeful; you said you were hopeful. It is a beautiful disposition. It is not mine,' she added with a sigh.

'It should be,' said Theodora; 'you were not born to sigh. Sighs should be for those who have no country, like myself; not for the daughters of England, the beautiful daughters of proud England.'

'But you have your husband's country, and that is proud and great.'

'I have only one country, and it is not my husband's; and I have only one thought, and it is to see it free.'

'It is a noble one,' said Lady Corisande, 'as I am sure are all your thoughts. There are the gentlemen; I am sorry they have come. There,' she added, as Monsignore Catesby entered the room, 'there is his evil genius.'

'But you have baffled him,' said Theodora.

'Ah!' said Lady Corisande, with a long-drawn sigh. 'Their manœuvres never cease. However, I think Monday must be safe. Would you come?' she

said, with a serious, searching glance, and in a kind of coaxing murmur.

'I should be an intruder, my dear lady,' said Theodora, declining the suggestion; 'but so far as hoping that our friend will never join the Church of Rome, you will have ever my ardent wishes.'

Theodora might have added her belief, for Lothair had never concealed from her a single thought or act of his life in this respect. She knew all and had weighed everything, and flattered herself that their frequent and unreserved conversations had not confirmed his belief in the infallibility of the Church of Rome, and perhaps of some other things.

It had been settled that there should be dancing this evening; all the young ladies had wished it. Lothair danced with Lady Flora Falkirk, and her sister, Lady Grizell, was in the same quadrille. They moved about like young giraffes in an African forest, but looked bright and happy. Lothair liked his cousins; their inexperience and innocence, and the simplicity with which they exhibited and expressed their feelings, had in it something bewitching. Then the rough remembrance of his old life at Falkirk, and its contrast with the present scene, had in it something stimulating. They were his juniors by several years, but they were always gentle and kind to him; and sometimes it seemed he was the only person whom they too had found kind and gentle. He called his cousin too by her Christian name, and he was amused, standing by this beautiful giantess, and calling her Flora. There were other amusing circumstances in the quadrille; not the least, Lord St. Aldegonde dancing with Mrs. Campian. The wonder of Lady St. Aldegonde was only equalled by her delight.

The Lord Lieutenant was standing by the Duke in a corner of the saloon, observing not with dissatisfaction his daughter, Lady Ida Alice, dancing with Lothair.

'Do you know, this is the first time I ever had the honour of meeting a Cardinal?' he said.

'And we never expected that it would happen to either of us in this country when we were at Christchurch together,' replied the Duke.

'Well, I hope everything is for the best,' said Lord Agramont. 'We are to have all these gentlemen in our good city of Grandchester to-morrow.'

'So I understand.'

'You read that paragraph in the newspapers? Do you think there is anything in it?'

'About our friend? It would be a great misfortune.'

'The Bishop says there is nothing in it,' said the Lord Lieutenant.

'Well, he ought to know. I understand he has had some serious conversation recently with our friend?'

'Yes; he has spoken to me about it. Are you going to attend the early celebration to-morrow? It is not much to my taste; a little new-fangled, I think; but I shall go, as they say it will do good.'

'I am glad of that; it is well that he should be impressed at this moment with the importance and opinion of his county.'

'Do you know, I never saw him before,' said the Lord Lieutenant. 'He is winning.'

'I know no youth'—said the Duke, 'I would not except my own son, and Bertram has never given me an uneasy moment—of whom I have a better

opinion, both as to heart and head. I should deeply deplore his being smashed by a Jesuit.'

The dancing had ceased for a moment; there was a stir; Lord Carisbrooke was enlarging, with unusual animation, to an interesting group about a new dance at Paris: the new dance. Could they not have it here? Unfortunately he did not know its name, and could not describe its figure; but it was something new; quite new; they have got it at Paris. Princess Metternich dances it. He danced it with her, and she taught it him; only he never could explain anything, and indeed never did exactly make it out. 'But you dance it with a shawl, and then two ladies hold the shawl, and the cavaliers pass under it. In fact, it is the only thing; it is the new dance at Paris.'

What a pity that anything so delightful should be so indefinite and perplexing, and indeed impossible, which rendered it still more desirable! If Lord Carisbrooke only could have remembered its name, or a single step in its figure; it was so tantalising!

'Do not you think so?' said Hugo Bohun to Mrs. Campian, who was sitting apart listening to Lord St. Aldegonde's account of his travels in the United States, which he was very sorry he ever quitted. And then they enquired to what Mr. Bohun referred, and then he told them all that had been said.

'I know what he means,' said Mrs. Campian. 'It is not a French dance; it is a Moorish dance.'

'That woman knows everything, Hugo,' said Lord St. Aldegonde in a solemn whisper. And then he called to his wife. 'Bertha, Mrs. Campian will tell you all about this dance that Carisbrooke is making such a mull of. Now look here, Bertha; you must

get the Campians to come to us as soon as possible. They are going to Scotland from this place, and there is no reason, if you manage it well, why they should not come on to us at once. Now exert yourself.'

'I will do all I can, Granville.'

'It is not French, it is Moorish; it is called the Tangerine,' said Theodora to her surrounding votaries. 'You begin with a circle.'

'But how are we to dance without the music?' said Lady Montairy.

'Ah! I wish I had known this,' said Theodora, 'before dinner, and I think I could have dotted down something that would have helped us. But let me see,' and she went up to the eminent professor, with whom she was well acquainted, and said, 'Signor Ricci, it begins so,' and she hummed divinely a fantastic air, which, after a few moments' musing, he reproduced; 'and then it goes off into what they call in Spain a saraband. Is there a shawl in the room?'

'My mother has always a shawl in reserve,' said Bertram, 'particularly when she pays visits to houses where there are galleries;' and he brought back a mantle of Cashmere.

'Now Signor Ricci,' said Mrs. Campian, and she again hummed an air, and moved forward at the same time with brilliant grace, waving the end of the shawl.

The expression of her countenance, looking round to Signor Ricci, as she was moving on to see whether he had caught her idea, fascinated Lothair.

'It is exactly what I told you,' said Lord Carisbrooke, 'and, I can assure you, it is the only dance now. I am very glad I remembered it.'

'I see it all,' said Signor Ricci, as Theodora rapidly

detailed to him the rest of the figure. 'And at any rate it will be the Tangerine with variations.'

'Let me have the honour of being your partner in this great enterprise,' said Lothair; 'you are the inspiration of Muriel.'

'Oh! I am very glad I can do anything, however slight, to please you and your friends. I like them all; but particularly Lady Corisande.'

A new dance in a country-house is a festival of frolic grace. The incomplete knowledge and the imperfect execution are themselves causes of merry excitement, in their contrast with the unimpassioned routine and almost unconscious practice of traditionary performances. And gay and frequent were the bursts of laughter from the bright and airy band who were proud to be the scholars of Theodora. The least successful among them was perhaps Lord Carisbrooke.

'Princess Metternich must have taught you wrong, Carisbrooke,' said Hugo Bohun.

They ended with a waltz, Lothair dancing with Miss Arundel. She accepted his offer to take some tea on its conclusion. While they were standing at the table, a little withdrawn from others, and he holding a sugar basin, she said in a low voice, looking on her cup and not at him, 'The Cardinal is vexed about the early celebration; he says it should have been at midnight.'

'I am sorry he is vexed,' said Lothair.

'He was going to speak to you himself,' continued Miss Arundel; 'but he felt a delicacy about it. He had thought that your common feelings respecting the Church might have induced you, if not to consult, at least to converse, with him on the subject; I mean as your guardian.'

'It might have been perhaps as well,' said Lothair; 'but I also feel a delicacy on these matters.'

'There ought to be none on such matters,' continued Miss Arundel, 'when everything is at stake.'

'I do not see that I could have taken any other course than I have done,' said Lothair. 'It can hardly be wrong. The Bishop's Church views are sound.'

'Sound!' said Miss Arundel; 'moonshine instead of sunshine.'

'Moonshine would rather suit a midnight than a morning celebration,' said Lothair; 'would it not?'

'A fair repartee, but we are dealing with a question that cannot be settled by jests. See,' she said with great seriousness, putting down her cup and taking again his offered arm, 'you think you are only complying with a form befitting your position and the occasion. You deceive yourself. You are hampering your future freedom by this step, and they know it. That is why it was planned. It was not necessary; nothing can be necessary so pregnant with evil. You might have made, you might yet make, a thousand excuses. It is a rite which hardly suits the levity of the hour, even with their feelings; but, with your view of its real character, it is sacrilege. What is occurring to-night might furnish you with scruples.' And she looked up in his face.

'I think you take an exaggerated view of what I contemplate,' said Lothair. 'Even with your convictions it may be an imperfect rite; but it never can be an injurious one.'

'There can be no compromise on such matters,' said Miss Arundel. 'The Church knows nothing of imperfect rites. They are all perfect because they are all divine; any deviation from them is heresy, and

fatal. My convictions on this subject are your convictions; act up to them.'

'I am sure if thinking of these matters would guide a man right ——' said Lothair with a sigh; and he stopped.

'Human thought will never guide you; and very justly, when you have for a guide Divine truth. You are now your own master; go at once to its fountain-head; go to Rome, and then all your perplexities will vanish, and forever.'

'I do not see much prospect of my going to Rome,' said Lothair, 'at least at present.'

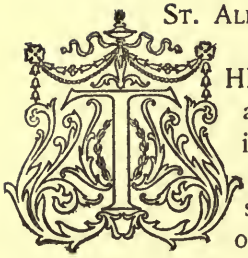
'Well,' said Miss Arundel; 'in a few weeks I hope to be there; and if so, I hope never to quit it.'

'Do not say that; the future is always unknown.'

'Not yours,' said Miss Arundel. 'Whatever you think, you will go to Rome. Mark my words. I summon you to meet me at Rome.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

St. Aldegonde Shocks the Bishop.



HERE can be little doubt, generally speaking, that it is more satisfactory to pass Sunday in the country than in town. There is something in the essential stillness of country life, which blends harmoniously with the ordinance of the most divine of our divine laws. It is pleasant too, when the congregation breaks up, to greet one's neighbours; to say kind words to kind faces; to hear some rural news profitable to learn, which sometimes enables you to do some good, and sometimes prevents others from doing some harm. A quiet domestic walk, too, in the afternoon has its pleasures; and so numerous and so various are the sources of interest in the country, that, though it be Sunday, there is no reason why your walk should not have an object.

But Sunday in the country, with your house full of visitors, is too often an exception to this general truth. It is a trial. Your guests cannot always be at church, and, if they could, would not like it. There is nothing to interest or amuse them: no sport; no castles or factories to visit; no adventurous

expeditions; no gay music in the morn, and no light dance in the evening. There is always danger of the day becoming a course of heavy meals and stupid walks, for the external scene and all its teeming circumstances, natural and human, though full of concern to you, are to your visitors an insipid blank.

How did Sunday go off at Muriel Towers?

In the first place there was a special train, which at an early hour took the Cardinal and his suite and the St. Jerome family to Grandchester, where they were awaited with profound expectation. But the Anglican portion of the guests were not without their share of ecclesiastical and spiritual excitement, for the Bishop was to preach this day in the chapel of the Towers, a fine and capacious sanctuary of florid Gothic, and his lordship was a sacerdotal orator of repute.

It had been announced that the breakfast hour was to be somewhat earlier. The ladies in general were punctual, and seemed conscious of some great event impending. The ladies Flora and Grizell entered with, each in her hand, a prayer-book of purple velvet adorned with a decided cross, the gift of the Primus. Lord Culloden, at the request of Lady Corisande, had consented to their hearing the Bishop, which he would not do himself. He passed his morning in finally examining the guardians' accounts, the investigation of which he conducted and concluded during the rest of the day with Mr. Putney Giles. Mrs. Campian did not leave her room. Lord St. Aldegonde came down late, and looked about him with an uneasy, ill-humoured air.

Whether from the absence of Theodora or from some other cause, he was brusque, ungracious, scowl-

ing, and silent, only nodding to the Bishop who benignly saluted him, refusing every dish that was offered, then getting up and helping himself at the side table, making a great noise with the carving instruments, and flouncing down his plate when he resumed his seat. Nor was his costume correct. All the other gentlemen, though their usual morning dresses were sufficiently fantastic (trunk hose of every form, stockings bright as paroquets, wondrous shirts, and velvet coats of every tint), habited themselves to-day, both as regards form and colour, in a style indicative of the subdued gravity of their feelings. Lord St. Aldegonde had on his shooting jacket of brown velvet and a pink shirt and no cravat, and his rich brown locks, always to a certain degree neglected, were peculiarly dishevelled.

Hugo Bohun, who was not afraid of him, and was a High Churchman, being in religion and in all other matters always on the side of the Duchesses, said, 'Well, St. Aldegonde, are you going to chapel in that dress?' But St. Aldegonde would not answer; he gave a snort and glanced at Hugo with the eye of a gladiator.

The meal was over. The Bishop was standing near the mantelpiece talking to the ladies, who were clustered round him; the archdeacon and the chaplain and some other clergy a little in the background; Lord St. Aldegonde, who, whether there were a fire or not, always stood with his back to the fireplace with his hands in his pockets, moved discourteously among them, assumed his usual position, and listened, as it were grimly, for a few moments to their talk; then he suddenly exclaimed in a loud voice, and with the groan of a rebellious Titan, 'How I hate Sunday!'

'Granville!' exclaimed Lady St. Aldegonde, turning pale. There was a general shudder.

'I mean in a country-house,' said Lord St. Aldegonde. 'Of course I mean in a country-house. I do not dislike it when alone, and I do not dislike it in London. But Sunday in a country-house is infernal.'

'I think it is now time for us to go,' said the Bishop, walking away with dignified reserve, and they all dispersed.

The service was choral and intoned; for although the Rev. Dionysius Smylie had not yet had time or opportunity, as was his intention, to form and train a choir from the household of the Towers, he had secured from his neighbouring parish and other sources external and effective aid in that respect. The parts of the service were skilfully distributed, and rarely were a greater number of priests enlisted in a more imposing manner. A good organ was well played; the singing, as usual, a little too noisy; there was an anthem and an introit, but no incense, which was forbidden by the Bishop; and though there were candles on the altar, they were not permitted to be lighted.

The sermon was most successful; the ladies returned with elate and animated faces, quite enthusiastic and almost forgetting in their satisfaction the terrible outrage of Lord St. Aldegonde. He himself had by this time repented of what he had done and recovered his temper, and greeted his wife with a voice and look which indicated to her practised senses the favourable change.

'Bertha,' he said, 'you know I did not mean anything personal to the Bishop in what I said. I do not like Bishops; I think there is no use in them;

but I have no objection to him personally; I think him an agreeable man; not at all a bore. Just put it right, Bertha. But I tell you what, Bertha, I cannot go to church here. Lord Culloden does not go, and he is a very religious man. He is the man I most agree with on these matters. I am a free churchman, and there is an end of it. I cannot go this afternoon. I do not approve of the whole thing. It is altogether against my conscience. What I mean to do, if I can manage it, is to take a real long walk with the Campians.'

Mrs. Campian appeared at luncheon. The Bishop was attentive to her; even cordial. He was resolved she should not feel he was annoyed by her not having been a member of his congregation in the morning. Lady Corisande too had said to him, 'I wish so much you would talk to Mrs. Campian; she is a sweet, noble creature, and so clever! I feel that she might be brought to view things in the right light.'

'I never know,' said the Bishop, 'how to deal with these American ladies. I never can make out what they believe, or what they disbelieve. It is a sort of confusion between Mrs. Beecher Stowe and the Fifth Avenue congregation and Barnum,' he added with a twinkling eye.

The second service was late; the Dean preached. The lateness of the hour permitted the Lord Lieutenant, and those guests who had arrived only the previous day, to look over the castle, or ramble about the gardens. St. Aldegonde succeeded in his scheme of a real long walk with the Campians, which Lothair, bound to listen to the head of his college, was not permitted to share.

In the evening Signor Mardoni, who had arrived, and Madame Isola Bella favoured them with what they called sacred music; principally prayers from operas and a grand Stabat Mater.

Lord Culloden invited Lothair into a further saloon, where they might speak without disturbing the performers or the audience.

'I'll just take advantage, my dear boy,' said Lord Culloden, in a tone of unusual tenderness, and of Doric accent, 'of the absence of these gentlemen to have a little quiet conversation with you. Though I have not seen so much of you of late as in old days, I take a great interest in you, no doubt of that, and I was very pleased to see how good-natured you were to the girls. You have romped with them when they were little ones. Now, in a few hours, you will be master of a great inheritance, and I hope it will profit ye. I have been over the accounts with Mr. Giles, and I was pleased to hear that you had made yourself properly acquainted with them in detail. Never you sign any paper without reading it first, and knowing well what it means. You will have to sign a release to us if you be satisfied, and that you may easily be. My poor brother-in-law left you as large an income as may be found on this side Trent, but I will be bound he would stare if he saw the total of the whole of your rentroll, Lothair. Your affairs have been well administered, though I say it who ought not. But it is not my management only, or principally, that has done it. It is the progress of the country, and you owe the country a good deal, and you should never forget you are born to be a protector of its liberties, civil and religious. And if the country sticks to free trade, and would enlarge

its currency, and be firm to the Protestant faith, it will, under Divine Providence, continue to progress.

'And here, my boy, I'll just say a word, in no disagreeable manner, about your religious principles. There are a great many stories about, and perhaps they are not true, and I am sure I hope they are not. If Popery were only just the sign of the cross, and music, and censer-pots, though I think them all superstitious, I'd be free to leave them alone if they would leave me. But Popery is a much deeper thing than that, Lothair, and our fathers found it out. They could not stand it, and we should be a craven crew to stand it now. A man should be master in his own house. You will be taking a wife some day; at least it is to be hoped so; and how will you like one of these Monsignores to be walking into her bedroom, eh; and talking to her alone when he pleases, and where he pleases; and when you want to consult your wife, which a wise man should often do, to find there is another mind between hers and yours? There's my girls, they are just two young geese, and they have a hankering after Popery, having had a Jesuit in the house. I do not know what has come to the women. They are for going into a convent, and they are quite right in that, for if they be Papists they will not find a husband easily in Scotland, I ween.

'And as for you, my boy, they will be telling you that it is only just this and just that, and there's no great difference, and what not; but I tell you that if once you embrace the Scarlet Lady, you are a tainted corpse. You'll not be able to order your dinner without a priest, and they will ride your best horses without saying with your leave or by your leave.'

The concert in time ceased; there was a stir in the room; the Rev. Dionysius Smylie moved about mysteriously, and ultimately seemed to make an obeisance before the Bishop. It was time for prayers.

'Shall you go?' said Lord St. Aldegonde to Mrs. Campian, by whom he was sitting.

'I like to pray alone,' she answered.

'As for that,' said St. Aldegonde, 'I am not clear we ought to pray at all; either in public or private. It seems very arrogant in us to dictate to an all-wise Creator what we desire.'

'I believe in the efficacy of prayer,' said Theodora.

'And I believe in you,' said St. Aldegonde, after a momentary pause.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Day of Rejoicing.

N THE morrow, the early celebration in the chapel was numerously attended. The Duchess and her daughters, Lady Agramont, and Mrs. Ardenne were among the faithful; but what encouraged and gratified the Bishop was, that the laymen, on whom he less relied, were numerously represented. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Carisbrooke, Lord Montairy, Bertram, and Hugo Bohun accompanied Lothair to the altar.

After the celebration, Lothair retired to his private apartments. It was arranged that he was to join his assembled friends at noon, when he would receive their congratulations, and some deputations from the county.

At noon, therefore, preparatively preceded by Mr. Putney Giles, whose thought was never asleep, and whose eye was on everything, the guardians, the Cardinal and the Earl of Culloden, waited on Lothair to accompany him to his assembled friends, and, as it were, launch him into the world.

They were assembled at one end of the chief gallery, and in a circle. Although the deputations

would have to advance the whole length of the chamber, Lothair and his guardians entered from a side apartment. Even with this assistance he felt very nervous. There was no lack of feeling, and, among many, of deep feeling, on this occasion, but there was an equal and a genuine exhibition of ceremony.

The Lord Lieutenant was the first person who congratulated Lothair, though the High Sheriff had pushed forward for that purpose, but in his awkward precipitation, he got involved with the train of the Honourable Lady Clotworthy, who bestowed on him such a withering glance that he felt a routed man, and gave up the attempt. There were many kind and some earnest words. Even St. Aldegonde acknowledged the genius of the occasion. He was grave, graceful, and dignified, and addressing Lothair by his title he said, that he hoped he would meet in life that happiness which he felt confident he deserved. Theodora said nothing, though her lips seemed once to move; but she retained for a moment Lothair's hand, and the expression of her countenance touched his innermost heart. Lady Corisande beamed with dazzling beauty. Her countenance was joyous, radiant; her mien imperial and triumphant. She gave her hand with graceful alacrity to Lothair, and said in a hushed tone, but every word of which reached his ear, 'One of the happiest hours of my life was eight o'clock this morning.'

The Lord Lieutenant and the county members then retired to the other end of the gallery, and ushered in the deputation of the magistracy of the county, congratulating their new brother, for Lothair had just been appointed to the bench, on his accession to his estates. The Lord Lieutenant himself

read the address, to which Lothair replied with a propriety all acknowledged. Then came the address of the Mayor and Corporation of Grandchester, of which city Lothair was hereditary high steward; and then that of his tenantry, which was cordial and characteristic. And here many were under the impression that this portion of the proceedings would terminate; but it was not so. There had been some whispering between the Bishop and the Archdeacon, and the Rev. Dionysius Smylie had, after conference with his superiors, twice left the chamber. It seems that the clergy had thought fit to take this occasion of congratulating Lothair on his great accession, and the proportionate duties which it would fall on him to fulfil. The Bishop approached Lothair and addressed him in a whisper. Lothair seemed surprised and a little agitated, but apparently bowed assent. Then the Bishop and his staff proceeded to the end of the gallery and introduced a diocesan deputation, consisting of archdeacons and rural deans, who presented to Lothair a most uncompromising address, and begged his acceptance of a Bible and prayer-book richly bound, and borne by the Rev. Dionysius Smylie on a cushion of velvet.

The habitual pallor of the Cardinal's countenance became unusually wan; the cheek of Clare Arundel was a crimson flush; Monsignore Catesby bit his lip; Theodora looked with curious seriousness as if she were observing the manners of a foreign country; St. Aldegonde snorted and pushed his hand through his hair, which had been arranged in unusual order. The great body of those present, unaware that this deputation was unexpected, were unmoved.

It was a trial for Lothair, and scarcely a fair one. He was not unequal to it, and what he said was esteemed at the moment by all parties as satisfactory; though the archdeacon in secret conclave afterwards observed, that he dwelt more on religion than on the Church, and spoke of the Church of Christ and not of the Church of England. He thanked them for their present of volumes which all must reverence or respect.

While all this was taking place within the Towers, vast bodies of people were assembling without. Besides the notables of the county and his tenantry and their families, which drained all the neighbouring villages, Lothair had forwarded several thousand tickets to the Mayor and Corporation of Grandchester, for distribution among their fellow-townsmen, who were invited to dine at Muriel and partake of the festivities of the day, and trains were hourly arriving with their eager and happy guests. The gardens were at once open for their unrestricted pleasure, but at two o'clock, according to the custom of the county under such circumstances, Lothair held what in fact was a levée, or rather a drawing-room, when every person who possessed a ticket was permitted, and even invited and expected, to pass through the whole range of the state apartments of Muriel Towers, and at the same time pay their respects to, and make the acquaintance of, their lord.

Lothair stood with his chief friends near him, the ladies, however, seated, and everyone passed: farmers and townsmen and honest folk down to the stokers of the trains from Grandchester, with whose presence St. Aldegonde was much pleased, and whom he carefully addressed as they passed by.

After this great reception they all dined in pavilions in the park: one thousand tenantry by themselves and at a fixed hour; the miscellaneous multitude in a huge crimson tent, very lofty, with many flags, and in which was served a banquet that never stopped till sunset, so that in time all might be satisfied; the notables and deputations, with the guests in the house, lunched in the armoury. It was a bright day, and there was unceasing music.

In the course of the afternoon, Lothair visited the pavilions, where his health was proposed and pledged, in the first by one of his tenants, and in the other by a workman, both orators of repute; and he addressed and thanked his friends. This immense multitude, orderly and joyous, roamed about the parks and gardens, or danced on a platform which the prescient experience of Mr. Giles had provided for them in a due locality, and whiled away the pleasant hours in expectation, a little feverish, of the impending fireworks, which, there was a rumour, were to be on a scale and in a style of which neither Grandchester nor the county had any tradition.

'I remember your words at Blenheim,' said Lothair to Theodora. 'You cannot say the present party is founded on the principle of exclusion.'

In the meantime, about six o'clock, Lothair dined in his great hall with his two hundred guests at a banquet where all the resources of nature and art seemed called upon to contribute to its luxury and splendour. The ladies who had never before dined at a public dinner were particularly delighted. They were delighted by the speeches, though they had very few; they were delighted by the national anthem, all rising; particularly they were delighted by 'three

times three and one cheer more,' and 'hip, hip.' It seemed to their unpractised ears like a great naval battle, or the end of the world, or anything else of unimaginable excitement, tumult, and confusion.

The Lord Lieutenant proposed Lothair's health, and dexterously made his comparative ignorance of the subject the cause of his attempting a sketch of what he hoped might be the character of the person whose health he proposed. Everyone intuitively felt the resemblance was just and even complete, and Lothair confirmed their kind and sanguine anticipations by his terse and well-considered reply. His proposition of the ladies' healths was a signal that the carriages were ready to take them, as arranged, to Muriel Mere.

The sun had set in glory over the broad expanse of waters still glowing in the dying beam; the people were assembled in thousands on the borders of the lake, in the centre of which was an island with a pavilion. Fanciful barges and gondolas of various shapes and colours were waiting for Lothair and his party, to carry them over to the pavilion, where they found a repast which became the hour and the scene: coffee and ices and whimsical drinks, which sultanas would sip in Arabian tales. No sooner were they seated than the sound of music was heard, distant, but now nearer, till there came floating on the lake, until it rested before the pavilion, a gigantic shell, larger than the building itself, but holding in its golden and opal seats Signor Mardoni and all his orchestra.

Then came a concert rare in itself, and ravishing in the rosy twilight; and in about half an hour, when the rosy twilight had subsided into a violet eve, and

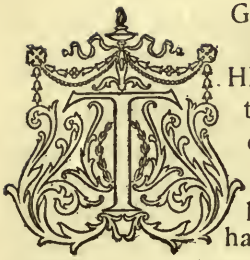
when the white moon that had only gleamed began to glitter, the colossal shell again moved on, and Lothair and his companions embarking once more in their gondolas, followed it in procession about the lake. He carried in his own barque the Duchess, Theodora, and the Lord Lieutenant, and was rowed by a crew in Venetian dresses. As he handed Theodora to her seat the impulse was irresistible: he pressed her hand to his lips.

Suddenly a rocket rose with a hissing rush from the pavilion. It was instantly responded to from every quarter of the lake. Then the island seemed on fire, and the scene of their late festivity became a brilliant palace, with pediments and columns and statues, bright in the blaze of coloured flame. For half an hour the sky seemed covered with blue lights and the bursting forms of many-coloured stars; golden fountains, like the eruption of a marine volcano, rose from different parts of the water; the statued palace on the island changed and became a forest glowing with green light; and finally a temple of cerulean tint, on which appeared in huge letters of prismatic colour the name of Lothair.

The people cheered, but even the voice of the people was overcome by troops of rockets rising from every quarter of the lake, and by the thunder of artillery. When the noise and the smoke had both subsided, the name of Lothair still legible on the temple but the letters quite white, it was perceived that on every height for fifty miles round they had fired a beacon.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Ghostly Counsel.



THE ball at Muriel which followed the concert on the lake was one of those balls which, it would seem, never would end. All the preliminary festivities, instead of exhausting the guests of Lothair, appeared only to have excited them, and rendered them more romantic and less tolerant of the routine of existence. They danced in the great gallery, which was brilliant and crowded, and they danced as they dance in a festive dream, with joy and the enthusiasm of gaiety. The fine ladies would sanction no exclusiveness. They did not confine their inspiring society, as is sometimes too often the case, to the Brecons and the Bertrams and the Carisbrookes; they danced fully and freely with the youth of the county, and felt that in so doing they were honouring and gratifying their host.

At one o'clock they supped in the armoury, which was illuminated for the first time, and a banquet in a scene so picturesque and resplendent renovated not merely their physical energies. At four o'clock the Duchess and a few others quietly disappeared, but her daughters remained, and St. Aldegonde danced

endless reels, which was a form in which he preferred to worship Terpsichore. Perceiving by an open window that it was dawn, he came up to Lothair and said, 'This is a case of breakfast.'

Happy and frolicsome suggestion! The invitations circulated, and it was soon known that they were all to gather at the matin meal.

'I am so sorry that her Grace has retired,' said Hugo Bohun to Lady St. Aldegonde, as he fed her with bread and butter, 'because she always likes early breakfasts in the country.'

The sun was shining as the guests of the house retired, and sank into couches from which it seemed they never could rise again; but, long after this, the shouts of servants and the scuffle of carriages intimated that the company in general were not so fortunate and expeditious in their retirement from the scene; and the fields were all busy, and even the towns awake, when the great body of the wearied but delighted wassailers returned from celebrating the majority of Lothair.

In the vast and statesmanlike programme of the festivities of the week, which had been prepared by Mr. and Mrs. Putney Giles, something of interest and importance had been appropriated to the morrow, but it was necessary to erase all this; and for a simple reason: no human being on the morrow morn even appeared; one might say, even stirred. After all the gay tumult in which even thousands had joined, Muriel Towers on the morrow presented a scene which only could have been equalled by the castle in the fairy tale inhabited by the Sleeping Beauty.

At length, about two hours after noon, bells began to sound which were not always answered. Then a

languid household prepared a meal of which no one for a time partook, till at last a Monsignore appeared and a rival Anglican or two. Then St. Aldegonde came in with a troop of men who had been bathing in the mere, and called loudly for kidneys, which happened to be the only thing not at hand, as is always the case. St. Aldegonde always required kidneys when he had sat up all night and bathed. 'But the odd thing is,' he said, 'you never can get anything to eat in these houses. Their infernal cooks spoil everything. That is why I hate staying with Bertha's people in the north at the end of the year. What I want in November is a slice of cod and a beefsteak, and, by Jove, I never could get them; I was obliged to come to town. It is no joke to have to travel three hundred miles for a slice of cod and a beefsteak.'

Notwithstanding all this, however, such is the magic of custom, that by sunset civilisation had resumed its reign at Muriel Towers. The party were assembled before dinner in the saloon, and really looked as fresh and bright as if the exhausting and tumultuous yesterday had never happened. The dinner, too, notwithstanding the criticism of St. Aldegonde, was firstrate, and pleased palates not so simply fastidious as his own. The Bishop and his suite were to depart on the morrow, but the Cardinal was to remain. His Eminence talked much to Mrs. Campian, by whom, from the first, he was much struck. He was aware that she was born a Roman, and was not surprised that, having married a citizen of the United States, her sympathies were what are styled liberal; but this only stimulated his anxious resolution to accomplish her conversion, both reli-

gious and political. He recognised in her a being whose intelligence, imagination, and grandeur of character might be of invaluable service to the Church.

In the evening Monsieur Raphael and his sister, and their colleagues, gave a representation which was extremely well done. There was no theatre at Muriel, but Apollonia had felicitously arranged a contiguous saloon for the occasion, and, as everybody was at ease in an arm-chair, they all agreed it was preferable to a regular theatre.

On the morrow they were to lunch with the Mayor and Corporation of Grandchester and view some of the principal factories; on the next day the county gave a dinner to Lothair in their hall, the Lord Lieutenant in the chair; on Friday there was to be a ball at Grandchester given by the county and city united to celebrate the great local event. It was whispered that this was to be a considerable affair. There was not an hour of the week that was not appropriated to some festive ceremony.

It happened on the morning of Thursday, the Cardinal being alone with Lothair, transacting some lingering business connected with the guardianship, and on his legs as he spoke, that he said, 'We live in such a happy tumult here, my dear child, that I have never had an opportunity of speaking to you on one or two points which interest me and should not be uninteresting to you. I remember a pleasant morning walk we had in the park at Vauxe, when we began a conversation which we never finished. What say you to a repetition of our stroll? 'Tis a lovely day, and I dare say we might escape by this window, and gain some green retreat without anyone disturbing us.'

'I am quite of your Eminence's mind,' said Lothair, taking up a wide-awake, 'and I will lead you where it is not likely we shall be disturbed.'

So, winding their way through the pleasure-grounds, they entered by a wicket a part of the park where the sunny glades soon wandered among the tall fern and wild groves of venerable oaks.

'I sometimes feel,' said the Cardinal, 'that I may have been too punctilious in avoiding conversation with you on a subject the most interesting and important to man. But I felt a delicacy in exerting my influence as a guardian on a subject my relations to which, when your dear father appointed me to that office, were so different from those which now exist. But you are now your own master; I can use no control over you but that influence which the words of truth must always exercise over an ingenuous mind.'

His Eminence paused for a moment and looked at his companion; but Lothair remained silent, with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

'It has always been a source of satisfaction, I would even say consolation, to me,' resumed the Cardinal, 'to know you were a religious man; that your disposition was reverential, which is the highest order of temperament, and brings us nearest to the angels. But we live in times of difficulty and danger, extreme difficulty and danger; a religious disposition may suffice for youth in the tranquil hour, and he may find, in due season, his appointed resting-place: but these are days of imminent peril; the soul requires a sanctuary. Is yours at hand?'

The Cardinal paused, and Lothair was obliged to meet a direct appeal. He said then, after a momen-

tary hesitation, 'When you last spoke to me, sir, on these grave matters, I said I was in a state of great despondency. My situation now is not so much despondent as perplexed.'

'And I wish you to tell me the nature of your perplexity,' replied the Cardinal, 'for there is no anxious embarrassment of mind which Divine truth cannot disentangle and allay.'

'Well,' said Lothair, 'I must say I am often perplexed at the differences which obtrude themselves between Divine truth and human knowledge.'

'Those are inevitable,' said the Cardinal. 'Divine truth being unchangeable, and human knowledge changing every century; rather, I should say, every generation.'

'Perhaps, instead of human knowledge, I should have said human progress,' rejoined Lothair.

'Exactly,' said the Cardinal; 'but what is progress? Movement. But what if it be movement in the wrong direction? What if it be a departure from Divine truth?'

'But I cannot understand why religion should be inconsistent with civilisation,' said Lothair.

'Religion is civilisation,' said the Cardinal; 'the highest: it is a reclamation of man from savageness by the Almighty. What the world calls civilisation, as distinguished from religion, is a retrograde movement, and will ultimately lead us back to the barbarism from which we have escaped. For instance, you talk of progress; what is the chief social movement of all the countries that three centuries ago separated from the unity of the Church of Christ? The rejection of the sacrament of Christian matrimony. The introduction of the law of divorce, which is, in fact, only a

middle term to the abolition of marriage. What does that mean? The extinction of the home and the household on which God has rested civilisation. If there be no home, the child belongs to the state, not to the parent. The state educates the child, and without religion, because the state in a country of progress acknowledges no religion. For every man is not only to think as he likes, but to write and to speak as he likes, and to sow with both hands broadcast where he will, errors, heresies, and blasphemies, without any authority on earth to restrain the scattering of this seed of universal desolation. And this system, which would substitute for domestic sentiment and Divine belief the unlimited and licentious action of human intellect and human will, is called progress. What is it but a revolt against God!'

'I am sure I wish there were only one Church and one religion,' said Lothair.

'There is only one Church and only one religion,' said the Cardinal; 'all other forms and phrases are mere phantasms, without root, or substance, or coherency. Look at that unhappy Germany, once so proud of its Reformation. What they call the leading journal tells us to-day, that it is a question there whether four-fifths or three-fourths of the population believe in Christianity. Some portion of it has already gone back, I understand, to Number Nip. Look at this unfortunate land, divided, subdivided, parcelled out in infinite schism, with new oracles every day, and each more distinguished for the narrowness of his intellect or the loudness of his lungs; once the land of saints and scholars, and people in pious pilgrimages, and finding always solace and support in

the divine offices of an ever-present Church, which were a true though a faint type of the beautiful future that awaited man. Why, only three centuries of this rebellion against the Most High have produced throughout the world, on the subject the most important that man should possess — a clear, firm faith — an anarchy of opinion throwing out every monstrous and fantastic form, from a caricature of the Greek philosophy to a revival of Fetism.'

'It is a chaos,' said Lothair, with a sigh.

'From which I wish to save you,' said the Cardinal, with some eagerness. 'This is not a time to hesitate. You must be for God, or for Antichrist. The Church calls upon her children.'

'I am not unfaithful to the Church,' said Lothair, 'which was the Church of my fathers.'

'The Church of England,' said the Cardinal. 'It was mine. I think of it ever with tenderness and pity. Parliament made the Church of England, and Parliament will unmake the Church of England. The Church of England is not the Church of the English. Its fate is sealed. It will soon become a sect, and all sects are fantastic. It will adopt new dogmas, or it will abjure old ones; anything to distinguish it from the non-conforming herd in which, nevertheless, it will be its fate to merge. The only consoling hope is that, when it falls, many of its children, by the aid of the Blessed Virgin, may return to Christ.'

'What I regret, sir,' said Lothair, 'is that the Church of Rome should have placed itself in antagonism with political liberty. This adds to the difficulties which the religious cause has to encounter; for it seems impossible to deny that political freedom is now the sovereign passion of communities.'

'I cannot admit,' replied the Cardinal, 'that the Church is in antagonism with political freedom. On the contrary, in my opinion, there can be no political freedom which is not founded on Divine authority; otherwise it can be at the best but a specious phantom of license inevitably terminating in anarchy. The rights and liberties of the people of Ireland have no advocates except the Church; because there, political freedom is founded on Divine authority; but if you mean by political freedom the schemes of the *illuminati* and the freemasons which perpetually torture the Continent, all the dark conspiracies of the secret societies, there, I admit, the Church is in antagonism with such aspirations after liberty; those aspirations, in fact, are blasphemy and plunder; and if the Church were to be destroyed, Europe would be divided between the atheist and the communist.'

There was a pause; the conversation had unexpectedly arrived at a point where neither party cared to pursue it. Lothair felt he had said enough; the Cardinal was disappointed with what Lothair had said. His Eminence felt that his late ward was not in that ripe state of probation which he had fondly anticipated; but being a man not only of vivid perception, but also of fertile resource, while he seemed to close the present conversation, he almost immediately pursued his object by another combination of means. Noticing an effect of scenery which pleased him, reminded him of Styria, and so on, he suddenly said: 'You should travel.'

'Well, Bertram wants me to go to Egypt with him,' said Lothair.

'A most interesting country,' said the Cardinal, 'and well worth visiting. It is astonishing what a

good guide old Herodotus still is in that land! But you should know something of Europe before you go there. Egypt is rather a land to end with. A young man should visit the chief capitals of Europe, especially the seats of learning and the arts. If my advice were asked by a young man who contemplated travelling on a proper scale, I should say begin with Rome. Almost all that Europe contains is derived from Rome. It is always best to go to the fountain-head, to study the original. The society too, there, is delightful: I know none equal to it. That, if you please, is civilisation, pious and refined. And the people, all so gifted and so good, so kind, so orderly, so charitable, so truly virtuous. I believe the Roman people to be the best people that ever lived, and this too while the secret societies have their foreign agents in every quarter, trying to corrupt them, but always in vain. If an act of political violence occurs, you may be sure it is confined entirely to foreigners.'

'Our friends, the St. Jeromes, are going to Rome,' said Lothair.

'Well, and that would be pleasant for you. Think seriously of this, my dear young friend. I could be of some little service to you if you go to Rome, which, after all, every man ought to do. I could put you in the way of easily becoming acquainted with all the right people, who would take care that you saw Rome with profit and advantage.'

Just at this moment, in a winding glade, they were met abruptly by a third person. All seemed rather to start at the sudden rencounter; and then Lothair eagerly advanced and welcomed the stranger with a proffered hand.

'This is a most unexpected, but to me most agreeable, meeting,' he said. 'You must now be my guest.'

'That would be a great honour,' said the stranger, 'but one I cannot enjoy. I had to wait at the station a couple of hours or so for my train, and they told me if I strolled here I should find some pretty country. I have been so pleased with it that I fear I have strolled too long, and I literally have not an instant at my command,' and he hurried away.

'Who is that person?' asked the Cardinal with some agitation.

'I have not the slightest idea,' said Lothair. 'All I know is, he once saved my life.'

'And all I know is,' said the Cardinal, 'he once threatened mine.'

'Strange!' said Lothair, and then he rapidly recounted to the Cardinal his adventure at the Fenian meeting.

'Strange!' echoed his Eminence.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Theodora's Confidences.

RS. CAMPIAN did not appear at luncheon, which was observed but not noticed. Afterwards, while Lothair was making some arrangements for the amusement of his guests, and contriving that they should fit in with the chief incident of the day, which was the banquet given to him by the county, and which it was settled the ladies were not to attend, the Colonel took him aside and said, 'I do not think that Theodora will care to go out to-day.'

'She is not unwell, I hope?'

'Not exactly; but she has had some news, some news of some friends, which has disturbed her. And if you will excuse me, I will request your permission not to attend the dinner to-day, which I had hoped to have had the honour of doing. But I think our plans must be changed a little. I almost think we shall not go to Scotland after all.'

'There is not the slightest necessity for your going to the dinner. You will have plenty to keep you in countenance at home. Lord St. Aldegonde is not going, nor I fancy any of them. I shall take the Duke with me and Lord Culloden, and if you do not

go, I shall take Mr. Putney Giles. The Lord Lieutenant will meet me there. I am sorry about Mrs. Campian, because I know she is not ever put out by little things. May I not see her in the course of the day? I should be very sorry that the day should pass over without seeing her.'

'Oh! I dare say she will see you in the course of the day, before you go.'

'When she likes. I shall not go out to-day; I shall keep in my rooms, always at her commands. Between ourselves I shall not be sorry to have a quiet morning and collect my ideas a little. Speech-making is a new thing for me. I wish you would tell me what to say to the county.'

Lothair had appropriated to the Campians one of the most convenient and complete apartments in the castle. It consisted of four chambers, one of them a saloon which had been fitted up for his mother when she married; a pretty saloon, hung with pale green silk, and portraits and scenes inlaid by Vanloo and Boucher. It was rather late in the afternoon when Lothair received a message from Theodora in reply to the wish that he had expressed of seeing her.

When he entered the room she was not seated, her countenance was serious. She advanced, and thanked him for wishing to see her, and regretted she could not receive him at an earlier hour. 'I fear it may have inconvenienced you,' she added; 'but my mind had been much disturbed, and too agitated for conversation.'

'Even now I may be an intruder?'

'No, it is past; on the contrary, I wish to speak to you; indeed, you are the only person with whom I could speak,' and she sat down.

Her countenance, which was unusually pale when he entered, became flushed. 'It is not a subject for the festive hour of your life,' she said, 'but I cannot resist my fate.'

'Your fate must always interest me,' murmured Lothair.

'Yes, but my fate is the fate of ages and of nations,' said Theodora, throwing up her head with that tumult of the brow which he had once before noticed. 'Amid the tortures of my spirit at this moment, not the least is that there is only one person I can appeal to, and he is one to whom I have no right to make that appeal.'

'If I be that person,' said Lothair, 'you have every right, for I am devoted to you.'

'Yes; but it is not personal devotion that is the qualification needed. It is not sympathy with me that would authorise such an appeal. It must be sympathy with a cause, and a cause for which I fear you do not, perhaps I should say you cannot, feel.'

'Why?' said Lothair.

'Why should you feel for my fallen country, who are the proudest citizen of the proudest of lands? Why should you feel for its debasing thraldom, you who, in the religious mystification of man, have at least the noble privilege of being a Protestant?'

'You speak of Rome?'

'Yes, of the only thought I have or ever had. I speak of that country which first impressed upon the world a general and enduring form of masculine virtue; the land of liberty, and law, and eloquence, and military genius, now garrisoned by monks and governed by a doting priest.'

'Everybody must be interested about Rome,' said Lothair. 'Rome is the country of the world, and even the doting priest you talk of boasts of two hundred millions of subjects.'

'If he were at Avignon again, I should not care for his boasts,' said Theodora. 'I do not grudge him his spiritual subjects; I am content to leave his superstition to Time. Time is no longer slow; his scythe mows quickly in this age. But when his debasing creeds are palmed off on man by the authority of our glorious Capitol, and the slavery of the human mind is schemed and carried on in the Forum, then, if there be real Roman blood left, and I thank my Creator there is much, it is time for it to mount and move,' and she rose and walked up and down the room.

'You have had news from Rome?' said Lothair.

'I have had news from Rome,' she replied, speaking slowly in a deep voice. And there was a pause.

Then Lothair said, 'When you have alluded to these matters before, you never spoke of them in a sanguine spirit.'

'I have seen the cause triumph,' said Theodora; 'the sacred cause of truth, of justice, of national honour. I have sat at the feet of the triumvirate of the Roman Republic: men who for virtue, and genius, and warlike skill and valour, and every quality that exalts man, were never surpassed in the olden time; no, not by the Catos and the Scipios; and I have seen the blood of my own race poured like a rich vintage on the victorious Roman soil. My father fell, who in stature and in mien was a god; and since then, my beautiful brothers, with shapes to enshrine

in temples; and I have smiled amid the slaughter of my race, for I believed that Rome was free; and yet all this vanished. How then, when we talked, could I be sanguine?'

'And yet you are sanguine now?' said Lothair, with a scrutinising glance, and he rose and joined her, leaning slightly on the mantelpiece.

'There was only one event that could secure the success of our efforts,' said Theodora, 'and that event was so improbable that I had long rejected it from calculation. It has happened, and Rome calls upon me to act.

'The Papalini are strong,' continued Theodora after a pause; 'they have been long preparing for the French evacuation; they have a considerable and disciplined force of Janissaries, a powerful artillery, the strong places of the city. The result of a rising under such circumstances might be more than doubtful; if unsuccessful, to us it would be disastrous. It is necessary that the Roman States should be invaded, and the Papal army must then quit their capital. We have no fear of them in the field. Yes,' she added with energy, 'we could sweep them from the face of the earth!'

'But the army of Italy,' said Lothair, 'will that be inert?'

'There it is,' said Theodora. 'That has been our stumbling-block. I have always known that if ever the French quitted Rome it would be on the understanding that the house of Savoy should inherit the noble office of securing our servitude. He in whom I alone confide would never credit this, but my information in this respect was authentic. However, it is no longer necessary to discuss the question. News

has come, and in no uncertain shape, that whatever may have been the understanding, under no circumstances will the Italian army enter the Roman States. We must strike, therefore, and Rome will be free. But how am I to strike? We have neither money nor arms. We have only men. I can give them no more, because I have already given them everything except my life, which is always theirs. As for my husband, who, I may say, wedded me on the battlefield, so far as wealth was concerned he was then a prince among princes, and would pour forth his treasure and his life with equal eagerness. But things have changed since Aspromonte. The struggle in his own country has entirely deprived him of revenues as great as any forfeited by their Italian princelings. In fact it is only by a chance that he is independent. Had it not been for an excellent man, one of your great English merchants, who was his agent here and managed his affairs, we should have been penniless. His judicious investments of the superfluity of our income, which at the time my husband never even noticed, have secured for Colonel Campian the means of that decorous life which he appreciates, but no more. As for myself, these considerations are nothing. I will not say I should be insensible to a refined life with refined companions, if the spirit were content and the heart serene; but I never could fully realise the abstract idea of what they call wealth; I never could look upon it except as a means to an end, and my end has generally been military material. Perhaps the vicissitudes of my life have made me insensible to what are called reverses of fortune, for when a child I remember sleeping on the moonlit flags of Paris, with no pillow except my tambourine, and I

remember it not without delight. Let us sit down. I feel I am talking in an excited, injudicious, egotistical, rhapsodical manner. I thought I was calm and I meant to have been clear. But the fact is, I am ashamed of myself. I am doing a wrong thing and in a wrong manner. But I have had a sleepless night and a day of brooding thought. I meant once to have asked you to help me, and now I feel that you are the last person to whom I ought to appeal.'

'In that you are in error,' said Lothair rising and taking her hand with an expression of much gravity; 'I am the right person for you to appeal to, the only person.'

'Nay,' said Theodora, and she shook her head.

'For I owe to you a debt that I never can repay,' continued Lothair. 'Had it not been for you, I should have remained what I was when we first met, a prejudiced, narrow-minded being, with contracted sympathies and false knowledge, wasting my life on obsolete trifles, and utterly insensible to the privilege of living in this wondrous age of change and progress. Why, had it not been for you I should have at this very moment been lavishing my fortune on an ecclesiastical toy, which I think of with a blush. There may be, doubtless there are, opinions in which we may not agree; but in our love of truth and justice there is no difference, dearest lady. No; though you must have felt that I am not, that no one could be, insensible to your beauty and infinite charms, still it is your consummate character that has justly fascinated my thought and heart; and I have long resolved, were I permitted, to devote to you my fortune and my life.'

FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY HERMAN ROUNTREE.

'I am the right person for you to appeal to—the only person.'

(See page 330.)

Copyright 1904, by M. Walter Dunne.

HERMAN RUMPLE

CHAPTER L.

News About Garibaldi.

THE month of September was considerably advanced, when a cab, evidently from its luggage fresh from the railway, entered the courtyard of Hexham House, of which the shuttered windows indicated the absence of its master, the Cardinal, then in Italy. But it was evident that the person who had arrived was expected, for before his servant could ring the hall bell the door opened, and a grave-looking domestic advanced with much deference, and awaited the presence of no less a personage than Monsignore Berwick.

'We have had a rough passage, good Clifford,' said the great man, alighting, 'but I see you duly received my telegram. You are always ready.'

'I hope my lord will find it not uncomfortable,' said Clifford. 'I have prepared the little suite which you mentioned, and have been careful that there should be no outward sign of anyone having arrived.'

'And now,' said the Monsignore, stopping for a moment in the hall, 'here is a letter which must be

instantly delivered and by a trusty hand,' and he gave it to Mr. Clifford, who, looking at the direction, nodded his head and said, 'By no one but myself. I will show my lord to his rooms, and depart with this instantly.'

'And bring back a reply,' added the Monsignore.

The well-lit room, the cheerful fire, the judicious refection on a side table, were all circumstances which usually would have been agreeable to a wearied traveller, but Monsignore Berwick seemed little to regard them. Though a man in general superior to care, and master of thought, his countenance was troubled and pensive even to dejection.

'Even the winds and waves are against us,' he exclaimed, too restless to be seated, and walking up and down the room with his arms behind his back. 'That such a struggle should fall to my lot! Why was I not a minister in the days of the Gregorys, the Innocents, even the Leos! But this is craven. There should be inspiration in peril, and the greatest where peril is extreme. I am a little upset with travel and the voyage and those telegrams not being answered. The good Clifford was wisely provident,' and he approached the table and took one glass of wine. 'Good! One must never despair in such a cause. And if the worst happens, it has happened before: and what then? Suppose Avignon over again, or even Gaeta, or even Paris? So long as we never relinquish our title to the Eternal City we shall be eternal. But then, some say, our enemies before were the sovereigns; now it is the people. Is it so? True, we have vanquished kings and baffled emperors; but the French Republic and the Roman Republic have alike reigned and ruled in the Vatican, and where

are they? We have lost provinces, but we have also gained them. We have twelve millions of subjects in the United States of America, and they will increase like the sands of the sea. Still it is a hideous thing to have come back, as it were, to the days of the Constable of Bourbon, and to be contemplating the siege of the Holy See, and massacre and pillage and ineffable horrors! The Papacy may survive such calamities, as it undoubtedly will, but I shall scarcely figure in history if under my influence such visitations should accrue. If I had only to deal with men I would not admit of failure; but when your antagonists are human thoughts, represented by invisible powers, there is something that might baffle a Machiavelli and appal a Borgia.'

While he was meditating in this vein the door opened, and Mr. Clifford, with some hasty action and speaking rapidly, exclaimed,

'He said he would be here sooner than myself. His carriage was at the door. I drove back as fast as possible; and indeed I hear something now in the court,' and he disappeared.

It was only to usher in, almost immediately, a stately personage in an evening dress, and wearing a decoration of a high class, who saluted the Monsignore with great cordiality.

'I am engaged to dine with the Prussian Ambassador, who has been obliged to come to town to receive a prince of the blood who is visiting the dockyards here; but I thought you might be later than you expected, and I ordered my carriage to be in waiting, so that we have a good little hour, and I can come on to you again afterwards if that will not do.'

'A little hour with us is a long hour with other people,' said the Monsignore, 'because we are friends and can speak without windings. You are a true friend to the Holy See; you have proved it. We are in great trouble and need of aid.'

'I hear that things are not altogether as we could wish,' said the gentleman in an evening dress; 'but I hope, and should think, only annoyances.'

'Dangers,' said Berwick, 'and great.'

'How so?'

'Well, we have invasion threatening us without and insurrection within,' said Berwick. 'We might, though it is doubtful, successfully encounter one of these perils, but their united action must be fatal.'

'All this has come suddenly,' said the gentleman. 'In the summer you had no fear, and our people wrote to us that we might be perfectly tranquil.'

'Just so,' said Berwick. 'If we had met a month ago I should have told you the same thing. A month ago the revolution seemed lifeless, penniless; without a future, without a resource. They had no money, no credit, no men. At present, quietly but regularly, they are assembling by thousands on our frontiers; they have to our knowledge received two large consignments of small arms, and apparently have unlimited credit with the trade, both in Birmingham and Liége; they have even artillery; everything is paid for in coin or in good bills; and, worst of all, they have a man, the most consummate soldier in Europe. I thought he was at New York, and was in hopes he would never have recrossed the Atlantic; but I know that he passed through Florence a fortnight ago, and I have seen a man who says he spoke to him at Narni.'

'The Italian government must stop all this,' said the gentleman.

'They do not stop it,' said Berwick. 'The government of his Holiness has made every representation to them: we have placed in their hands indubitable evidence of the illegal proceedings that are taking place and of the internal dangers we experience in consequence of their exterior movements. But they do nothing: it is even believed that the royal troops are joining the insurgents, and Garibaldi is spouting with impunity in every balcony of Florence.'

'You may depend upon it that our government is making strong representations to the government of Florence.'

'I come from Paris and elsewhere,' said Berwick with animation and perhaps a degree of impatience. 'I have seen everybody there, and I have heard everything. It is not representations that are wanted from your government; it is something of a different kind.'

'But if you have seen everybody at Paris and heard everything, how can I help you?'

'By acting upon the government here. A word from you to the English Minister would have great weight at this juncture. Queen Victoria is interested in the maintenance of the Papal throne. Her Catholic subjects are counted by millions. The influence of his Holiness has been hitherto exercised against the Fenians. France would interfere if she was sure the step would not be disapproved by England.'

'Interfere!' said the gentleman. 'Our return to Rome almost before we have paid our laundresses' bills in the Eternal City would be a diplomatic scandal.'

'A diplomatic scandal would be preferable to a European revolution.'

'Suppose we were to have both?' and the gentleman drew his chair near the fire.

'I am convinced that a want of firmness now,' said Berwick, 'would lead to inconceivable calamities for all of us.'

'Let us understand each other, my very dear friend Berwick,' said his companion, and he threw his arm over the back of his chair and looked the Roman full in his face. 'You say you have been at Paris and elsewhere, and have seen everybody and heard everything.'

'Yes, yes.'

'Something has happened to us also during the last month, and as unexpectedly as to yourselves.'

'The secret societies? Yes, he spoke to me on that very point, and fully. 'Tis strange, but is only, in my opinion, an additional argument in favour of crushing the evil influence.'

'Well, that he must decide. But the facts are startling. A month ago the secret societies in France were only a name; they existed only in the memory of the police, and almost as a tradition. At present we know that they are in complete organisation, and what is most strange is, that the prefects write they have information that the Mary Anne associations, which are essentially republican and are scattered about the provinces, are all revived and are astir. Mary Anne, as you know, was the red name for the Republic years ago, and there always was a sort of myth that these societies had been founded by a woman. Of course that is all nonsense, but they keep it up; it affects the public imagination, and my

government has undoubted evidence that the word of command has gone round to all these societies that Mary Anne has returned and will issue her orders, which must be obeyed.'

'The Church is stronger, and especially in the provinces, than the Mary Anne societies,' said Berwick.

'I hope so,' said his friend; 'but you see, my dear Monsignore, the question with us is not so simple as you put it. The secret societies will not tolerate another Roman interference, to say nothing of the diplomatic hubbub, which we might, if necessary, defy; but what if, taking advantage of the general indignation, your new kingdom of Italy may seize the golden opportunity of making a popular reputation, and declare herself the champion of national independence against the interference of the foreigner? My friend, we tread on delicate ground.'

'If Rome falls, not an existing dynasty in Europe will survive five years,' said Berwick.

'It may be so,' said his companion, but with no expression of incredulity. 'You know how consistently and anxiously I have always laboured to support the authority of the Holy See, and to maintain its territorial position as the guaranty of its independence; but fate has decided against us. I cannot indulge in the belief that his Holiness will ever regain his lost provinces; a capital without a country is an apparent anomaly, which I fear will always embarrass us. We can treat the possession as the capital of Christendom, but, alas! all the world are not as good Christians as ourselves, and Christendom is a country no longer marked out in the map of the world. I wish,' continued the gentleman in

a tone almost coaxing, 'I wish we could devise some plan which, humanly speaking, would secure to his Holiness the possession of his earthly throne for ever. I wish I could induce you to consider more favorably that suggestion, that his Holiness should content himself with the ancient city, and, in possession of St. Peter's and the Vatican, leave the rest of Rome to the vulgar cares and the mundane anxieties of the transient generation. Yes,' he added with energy, 'if, my dear Berwick, you could see your way to this, or something like this, I think, even now and at once, I could venture to undertake that the Emperor, my master, would soon put an end to all these disturbances and dangers, and that——'

'*Non possumus*,' said Berwick, sternly stopping him, 'sooner than that Attila, the Constable of Bourbon, or the blasphemous orgies of the Red Republic! After all, it is the Church against the secret societies. They are the only two strong things in Europe, and will survive kings, emperors, or parliaments.'

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and, bidden to enter, Mr. Clifford presented himself with a sealed paper for the gentleman in evening dress. 'Your secretary, sir, brought this, which he said must be given you before you went to the Ambassador.'

''Tis well,' said the gentleman, and he rose, and with a countenance of some excitement read the paper, which contained a telegram; and then he said, 'This, I think, will help us out of our immediate difficulties, my dear Monsignore. Rattazzi has behaved like a man of sense, and has arrested Gari-

baldi. But you do not seem, my friend, as pleased as I should have anticipated.'

'Garibaldi has been arrested before,' said Berwick.

'Well, well, I am hopeful; but I must go to my dinner. I will see you again to-morrow.'

CHAPTER LI.

Lothair as Captain Muriel.

HE continuous gathering of what, in popular language, were styled the Garibaldi Volunteers, on the southern border of the Papal territory in the autumn of 1867, was not the only or perhaps the greatest danger which then threatened the Holy See, though the one which most attracted its alarmed attention. The considerable numbers in which this assemblage was suddenly occurring; the fact that the son of the Liberator had already taken its command, and only as the precursor of his formidable sire; the accredited rumour that Ghirelli at the head of a purely Roman legion was daily expected to join the frontier force; that Nicotera was stirring in the old Neapolitan kingdom, while the Liberator himself at Florence and in other parts of Tuscany was even ostentatiously, certainly with impunity, preaching the new crusade and using all his irresistible influence with the populace to excite their sympathies and to stimulate their energy, might well justify the extreme apprehension of the court of Rome. And yet dangers at least equal, and almost as close, were at the same time preparing unnoticed and unknown.

In the mountainous range between Fiascone and Viterbo, contiguous to the sea, is a valley surrounded by chains of steep and barren hills, but which is watered by a torrent scarcely dry even in summer; so that the valley itself, which is not inconsiderable in its breadth, is never without verdure, while almost a forest of brushwood formed of shrubs which in England we should consider rare, bounds the natural turf and ascends, sometimes to no inconsiderable height, the nearest hills.

Into this valley, towards the middle of September, there defiled one afternoon, through a narrow pass, a band of about fifty men, all armed, and conducting a cavalcade or rather a caravan of mules laden with munitions of war and other stores. When they had gained the centre of the valley, and a general halt was accomplished, their commander, accompanied by one who was apparently an officer, surveyed all the points of the locality; and when their companions had rested and refreshed themselves, they gave the necessary orders for the preparation of a camp. The turf already afforded a sufficient area for their present wants, but it was announced that on the morrow they must commence clearing the brushwood. In the mean time one of the liveliest scenes of military life soon rapidly developed itself: the canvas houses were pitched, the sentries appointed, the videttes established. The commissariat was limited to bread and olives, and generally the running stream, varied sometimes by coffee and always consoled by tobacco.

On the third day, amidst their cheerful though by no means light labours, a second caravan arrived, evidently expected and heartily welcomed. Then in another eight-and-forty hours, smaller bodies of men

seemed to drop down from the hills, generally without stores, but always armed. Then men came from neighbouring islands in open boats, and one morning a considerable detachment crossed the water from Corsica. So that at the end of a week or ten days there was an armed force of several hundred men in this once silent valley, now a scene of constant stir and continual animation, for some one or something was always arriving, and from every quarter; men and arms and stores crept in from every wild pass of the mountains and every little rocky harbour of the coast.

About this time, while the officer in command was reviewing a considerable portion of the troops, the rest labouring in still clearing the brushwood and establishing the many works incidental to a camp, half a dozen horsemen were seen descending the mountain pass by which the original body had entered the valley. A scout had preceded them, and the troops with enthusiasm awaited the arrival of that leader a message from whose magic name had summoned them to this secluded rendezvous from many a distant state and city. Unruffled, but with an inspiring fire in his pleased keen eye, that General answered their devoted salute whom hitherto we have known by his travelling name of Captain Bruges.

It was only towards the end of the preceding month that he had resolved to take the field; but the organisation of the secret societies is so complete that he knew he could always almost instantly secure the assembling of a picked force in a particular place. The telegraph circulated its mystic messages to every part of France and Italy and Belgium, and to some old friends not so conveniently at hand, but who he

doubted not would arrive in due time for action. He himself had employed the interval in forwarding all necessary supplies, and he had passed through Florence in order that he might confer with the great spirit of Italian movement and plan with him the impending campaign.

After he had passed in review the troops, the General, with the officers of his staff who had accompanied him, visited on foot every part of the camp. Several of the men he recognised by name; to all of them he addressed some inspiring word: a memory of combats in which they had fought together, or happy allusions to adventures of romantic peril; some question which indicated that local knowledge which is magical for those who are away from home; mixed with all this, sharp, clear enquiries as to the business of the hour, which proved the master of detail, severe in discipline but never deficient in sympathy for his troops.

After sunset, enveloped in their cloaks, the General and his companions, the party increased by the officers who had been in command previous to his arrival, smoked their cigars round the camp fire.

'Well, Sarano,' said the General, 'I will look over your muster-roll to-morrow, but I should suppose I may count on a thousand rifles or so. I want three, and we shall get them. The great man would have supplied them me at once, but I will not have boys. He must send those on to Menotti. I told him, "I am not a man of genius; I do not pretend to conquer kingdoms with boys. Give me old soldiers, men who have served a couple of campaigns, and been seasoned with four-and-twenty months of camp life, and I will not disgrace you or myself."'

'We have had no news from the other place for a long time,' said Sarano. 'How is it?'

'Well enough. They are in the mountains about Nerola, in a position not very unlike this; numerically strong, for Nicotera has joined them, and Ghirelli with the Roman Legion is at hand. They must be quiet till the great man joins them; I am told they are restless. There has been too much noise about the whole business. Had they been as mum as you have been, we should not have had all these representations from France and these threatened difficulties from that quarter. The Papalini would have complained and remonstrated, and Rattazzi could have conscientiously assured the people at Paris that they were dealing with exaggerations and bugbears; the very existence of the frontier force would have become a controversy, and while the newspapers were proving it was a myth we should have been in the Vatican.'

'And when shall we be there, General?'

'I do not want to move for a month. By that time I shall have two thousand five hundred or three thousand of my old comrades, and the great man will have put his boys in trim. Both bodies must leave their mountains at the same time, join in open country and march to Rome.'

As the night advanced, several of the party rose and left the camp fire, some to their tents, some to their duties. Two of the staff remained with the General.

'I am disappointed and uneasy that we have not heard from Paris,' said one of them.

'I am disappointed,' said the General, 'but not uneasy; she never makes a mistake.'

'The risk was too great,' rejoined the speaker in a depressed tone.

'I do not see that,' said the General. 'What is the risk? Who could possibly suspect the lady's-maid of the Princess of Tivoli! I am told that the Princess has become quite a favourite at the Tuileries.'

'They say that the police is not so well informed as it used to be; nevertheless, I confess I should be much happier were she sitting round this camp fire.'

'Courage!' said the General. 'I do not believe in many things, but I do believe in the divine Theodora. What say you, Captain Muriel? I hope you are not offended by my criticism of young soldiers. You are the youngest in our band, but you have good military stuff in you, and will be soon seasoned.'

'I feel I serve under a master of the art,' replied Lothair, 'and will not take the gloomy view of Colonel Campian about our best friend, though I share all his disappointment. It seems to me that detection is impossible. I am sure that I could not have recognised her when I handed the Princess into her carriage.'

'The step was absolutely necessary,' said the General; 'no one could be trusted but herself, no other person has the influence. All our danger is from France. The Italian troops will never cross the frontier to attack us, rest assured of that. I have proof of it. And it is most difficult, almost impossible for the French to return. There never would have been an idea of such a step, if there had been a little more discretion at Florence, less of those manifestoes and speeches from balconies. But we must not criticise

one who is above criticism. Without him we could do nothing, and when he stamps his foot men rise from the earth. I will go the rounds; come with me, Captain Muriel. Colonel, I order you to your tent: you are a veteran; the only one among us, at least on the staff, who was wounded at Aspromonte.'

CHAPTER LII.

The Camp in the Apennines.

THE life of Lothair had been so strange and exciting since he quitted Muriel Towers that he had found little time for that reflection in which he was once so prone to indulge. Perhaps he shrank from it. If he wanted an easy distraction from self-criticism (it may be a convenient refuge from the scruples, or even the pangs, of conscience), it was profusely supplied by the startling affairs of which he formed a part, the singular characters with whom he was placed in contact, the risk and responsibility which seemed suddenly to have encompassed him with their ever-stimulating influence, and lastly, by the novelty of foreign travel, which even under ordinary circumstances has a tendency to rouse and stir up even ordinary men.

So long as Theodora was his companion in their councils and he was listening to her deep plans and daring suggestions, enforced by that calm enthusiasm which was not the least powerful of her commanding spells, it is not perhaps surprising that he should have yielded without an effort to her bewitching ascendency. But when they had separated, and she

had embarked on that perilous enterprise of personally conferring with the chiefs of those secret societies of France which had been fancifully baptised by her popular name and had nurtured her tradition as a religious faith, it might have been supposed that Lothair, left to himself, might have recurred to the earlier sentiments of his youth. But he was not left to himself. He was left with her injunctions, and the spirit of the oracle, though the divinity was no longer visible, pervaded his mind and life.

Lothair was to accompany the General as one of his aides-de-camp, and he was to meet Theodora again on what was contemplated as the field of memorable actions. Theodora had wisely calculated on the influence, beneficial in her view, which the character of a man like the General would exercise over Lothair. This consummate military leader, though he had pursued a daring career and was a man of strong convictions, was distinguished by an almost unerring judgment and a mastery of method rarely surpassed. Though he was without imagination or sentiment, there were occasions on which he had shown he was not deficient in a becoming sympathy, and he had a rapid and correct perception of character. He was a thoroughly honest man, and in the course of a life of great trial and vicissitude even envenomed foes had never impeached his pure integrity. For the rest, he was unselfish, but severe in discipline, inflexible and even ruthless in the fulfilment of his purpose. A certain simplicity of speech and conduct, and a disinterestedness which even in little things was constantly exhibiting itself, gave to his character even charm, and rendered personal intercourse with him highly agreeable.

In the countless arrangements which had to be made, Lothair was never wearied in recognising and admiring the prescience and precision of his chief; and when the day had died, and for a moment they had ceased from their labours, or were travelling together, often through the night, Lothair found in the conversation of his companion, artless and unrestrained, a wonderful fund of knowledge both of men and things, and that, too, in very different climes and countries.

The camp in the Apennines was not favourable to useless reverie. Lothair found unceasing and deeply interesting occupation in his numerous and novel duties, and if his thoughts for a moment wandered beyond the barren peaks around him, they were attracted and engrossed by one subject, and that was, naturally, Theodora. From her they had heard nothing since her departure, except a mysterious though not discouraging telegram which was given to them by Colonel Campian when he had joined them at Florence. It was difficult not to feel anxious about her, though the General would never admit the possibility of her personal danger.

In this state of affairs, a week having elapsed since his arrival at the camp, Lothair, who had been visiting the outposts, was summoned one morning by an orderly to the tent of the General. That personage was on his legs when Lothair entered it, and was dictating to an officer writing at a table.

'You ought to know my military secretary,' said the General as Lothair entered, 'and therefore I will introduce you.'

Lothair was commencing a suitable reverence of recognition as the secretary raised his head to receive

it, when he suddenly stopped, changed colour, and for a moment seemed to lose himself, and then murmured, 'Is it possible?'

It was indeed Theodora: clothed in male attire she seemed a stripling.

'Quite possible,' she said, 'and all is well. But I found it a longer business than I had counted on. You see, there are so many new persons who knew me only by tradition, but with whom it was necessary I should personally confer. And I had more difficulty, just now, in getting through Florence than I had anticipated. The Papalini and the French are both worrying our allies in that city about the gathering on the southern frontier, and there is a sort of examination, true or false I will not aver, of all who depart. However, I managed to pass with some soldiers' wives who were carrying fruit as far as Narni, and there I met an old comrade of Aspromonte, who is a custom-officer now, but true to the good cause, and he, and his daughter who is with me, helped me through everything, and so I am with my dear friends again.'

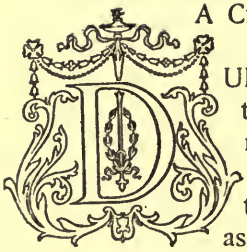
After some slight conversation in this vein, Theodora entered into a detailed narrative of her proceedings, and gave to them her views of the condition of affairs.

'By one thing, above all others,' she said, 'I am impressed, and that is the unprecedented efforts which Rome is making to obtain the return of the French. There never was such influence exercised, such distinct offers made, such prospects intimated. You may prepare yourself for anything: a papal coronation, a family pontiff; I could hardly say a king of Rome, though he has been reminded of that royal fact.

Our friends have acted with equal energy and with perfect temper. The heads of the societies have met in council, and resolved that if France will refuse to interfere, no domestic disturbance shall be attempted during this reign, and they have communicated this resolution to headquarters. He trusts them; he knows they are honest men. They did something like this before the Italian war, when he hesitated about heading the army from the fear of domestic revolution. Anxious to secure the freedom of Italy, they apprised him that if he personally entered the field they would undertake to ensure tranquillity at home. The engagement was scrupulously fulfilled. When I left Paris all looked well, but affairs require the utmost vigilance and courage. It is a mighty struggle; it is a struggle between the Church and the secret societies; and it is a death struggle.'

CHAPTER LIII.

A Charming Secretary.



URING the week that elapsed after the arrival of Theodora at the camp, many recruits and considerable supplies of military stores reached the valley. Theodora really acted as secretary to the General, and her labours were not light. Though Lothair was frequently in her presence, they were never or rarely alone, and when they conversed together her talk was of details. The scouts, too, had brought information, which might have been expected, that their rendezvous was no longer a secret at Rome. The garrison of the neighbouring town of Viterbo had therefore been increased, and there was even the commencement of an entrenched camp in the vicinity of that place, to be garrisoned by a detachment of the legion of Antibes and other good troops, so that any junction between the General and Garibaldi, if contemplated, should not be easily effected.

In the meantime, the life of the camp was busy. The daily drill and exercise of two thousand men was not a slight affair, and the constant changes in orders which the arrival of bodies of recruits oc-

casioned rendered this primary duty more difficult; the office of quartermaster required the utmost resource and temper; the commissariat, which from the nature of the country could depend little upon forage, demanded extreme husbandry and forbearance. But perhaps no labours were more severe than those of the armourers, the clink of whose instruments resounded unceasingly in the valley. And yet such is the magic of method, when directed by a master mind, that the whole went on with the regularity and precision of machinery. More than two thousand armed men, all of whom had been accustomed to an irregular, some to a lawless life, were as docile as children; animated, in general, by what they deemed a sacred cause, and led by a chief whom they universally alike adored and feared.

Among these wild warriors, Theodora, delicate and fragile, but with a mien of majesty, moved like the spirit of some other world, and was viewed by them with admiration not unmixed with awe. Veterans round the camp fire had told to the new recruits her deeds of prowess and devotion; how triumphantly she had charged at Voltorno, and how heroically she had borne their standard when they were betrayed at fatal Aspromonte.

The sun had sunk behind the mountains, but was still high in the western heaven, when a mounted lancer was observed descending a distant pass into the valley. The General and his staff had not long commenced their principal meal of the day, of which the disappearance of the sun behind the peak was the accustomed signal. This permitted them, without inconvenience, to take their simple repast in the open, but still warm, air. Theodora was seated between

the General and her husband, and her eye was the first that caught the figure of the distant but descending stranger.

'What is that?' she asked.

The General immediately using his telescope, after a moment's examination, said:

'A lancer of the Royal Guard.'

All eyes were now fixed upon the movements of the horseman. He had descended the winding steep, and now was tracking the craggy path which led into the plain. As he reached the precinct of the camp he was challenged but not detained. Nearer and nearer he approached, and it was evident from his uniform that the conjecture of his character by the General was correct.

'A deserter from the Guard,' whispered Colonel Campian to Lothair.

The horseman was conducted by an officer to the presence of the commander. When that presence was reached the lancer, still silent, slowly lowered his tall weapon and offered the General the despatch which was fastened to the head of his spear.

Every eye was on the countenance of their chief as he perused the missive, but that countenance was always inscrutable. It was observed, however, that he read the paper twice. Looking up, the General said to the officer: 'See that the bearer is well quartered. This is for you,' he added in a low voice to Theodora, and he gave her an enclosure; 'read it quietly, and then come into my tent.'

Theodora read the letter, and quietly; though, without the preparatory hint, it might have been difficult to have concealed her emotion. Then, after a short pause, she rose, and the General, requesting

his companions not to disturb themselves, joined her, and they proceeded in silence to his tent.

'He is arrested,' said the General when they had entered it, 'and taken to Alessandria, where he is a close prisoner. 'Tis a blow, but I am more grieved than surprised.'

This was the arrest of Garibaldi at Sinigaglia by the Italian Government, which had been communicated at Hexham House to Monsignore Berwick by his evening visitor.

'How will it affect operations in the field?' enquired Theodora.

'According to this despatch, in no degree. Our original plan is to be pursued, and acted upon the moment we are ready. That should be in a fortnight, or perhaps three weeks. Menotti is to take the command on the southern frontier. Well, it may prevent jealousies. I think I shall send Sarano there to reconnoitre; he is well both with Nicotera and Ghirelli, and may keep things straight.'

'But there are other affairs besides operations in the field,' said Theodora, 'and scarcely less critical. Read this,' and she gave him the enclosure, which ran in these words:

'The General will tell thee what has happened. Have no fear for that. All will go right. It will not alter our plans a bunch of grapes. Be perfectly easy about this country. No Italian soldier will ever cross the frontier except to combat the French. Write that on thy heart. Are other things as well? other places? My advices are bad. All the prelates are on their knees to him, with blessings on their lips and curses in their pockets. Archbishop of Paris is as bad as

any. Berwick is at Biarritz, an inexhaustible intriguer; the only priest I fear. I hear from one who never misled me that the Polhes brigade has orders to be in readiness. The Mary Anne societies are not strong enough for the situation; too local: he listens to them, but he has given no pledge. We must go deeper. 'Tis an affair of *Madre Natura*. Thou must see Colonna.'

'Colonna is at Rome,' said the General, 'and cannot be spared. He is acting President of the National Committee, and has enough upon his hands.'

'I must see him,' said Theodora.

'I had hoped I had heard the last of the *Madre Natura*,' said the General with an air of discontent.

'And the Neapolitans hope they have heard the last of the eruptions of their mountain,' said Theodora; 'but the necessities of things are sterner stuff than the hopes of men.'

'Its last effort appalled and outraged Europe,' said the General.

'Its last effort forced the French into Italy, and has freed the country from the Alps to the Adriatic,' rejoined Theodora.

'If the great man had only been as quiet as we have been,' said the General, lighting a cigar, 'we might have been in Rome by this time.'

'If the great man had been quiet, we should not have had a volunteer in our valley,' said Theodora. 'My faith in him is implicit; he has been right in everything, and has never failed except when he has been betrayed. I see no hope for Rome except in his convictions and energy. I do not wish to die and feel I have devoted my life only to secure the triumph

of Savoyards who have sold their own country, and of priests whose impostures have degraded mine.'

'Ah! those priests!' exclaimed the General. 'I really do not much care for anything else. They say the Savoyard is not a bad comrade, and at any rate he can charge like a soldier. But those priests! I fluttered them once! Why did I spare any? Why did I not burn down St. Peter's? I proposed it, but Mirandola, with his history and his love of art and all that old furniture, would reserve it for a temple of the true God and for the glory of Europe! Fine results we have accomplished! And now we are here, hardly knowing where we are, and, as it appears, hardly knowing what to do.'

'Not so, dear General,' said Theodora. 'Where we are is the threshold of Rome, and if we are wise we shall soon cross it. This arrest of our great friend is a misfortune, but not an irredeemable one. I thoroughly credit what he says about the Italian troops. Rest assured he knows what he is talking about: they will never cross the frontier against us. The danger is from another land. But there will be no peril if we are prompt and firm. Clear your mind of all these dark feelings about the *Madre Natura*. All that we require is that the most powerful and the most secret association in Europe should ratify what the local societies of France have already intimated. It will be enough. Send for Colonna, and leave the rest to me.'

CHAPTER LIV.

Madre Natura.

HE *Madre Natura* is the oldest, the most powerful, and the most occult of the secret societies of Italy. Its mythic origin reaches the era of paganism, and it is not impossible that it may have been founded by some of the despoiled professors of the ancient faith. As time advanced, the brotherhood assumed many outward forms, according to the varying spirit of the age: sometimes they were freemasons, sometimes they were soldiers, sometimes artists, sometimes men of letters. But whether their external representation were a lodge, a commandery, a studio, or an academy, their inward purpose was ever the same; and that was to cherish the memory, and, if possible, to secure the restoration, of the Roman republic, and to expel from the Aryan settlement of Romulus the creeds and sovereignty of what they styled the Semitic invasion.

The *Madre Natura* have a tradition that one of the most celebrated of the Popes was admitted to their fraternity as Cardinal dei Medici, and that when he ascended the throne, mainly through their labours,

he was called upon to co-operate in the fulfilment of the great idea. An individual who in his youth has been the member of a secret society, and subsequently ascends a throne, may find himself in an embarrassing position. This, however, according to the tradition, which there is some documentary ground to accredit, was not the perplexing lot of his Holiness, Pope Leo X. His tastes and convictions were in entire unison with his early engagements, and it is believed that he took an early and no unwilling opportunity of submitting to the conclave a proposition to consider whether it was not both expedient and practicable to return to the ancient faith, for which their temples had been originally erected.

The chief tenet of the society of *Madre Natura* is denoted by its name. They could conceive nothing more benignant and more beautiful, more provident and more powerful, more essentially divine, than that system of creative order to which they owed their being, and in which it was their privilege to exist. But they differed from other schools of philosophy that have held this faith in this singular particular: they recognised the inability of the Latin race to pursue the worship of nature in an abstract spirit, and they desired to revive those exquisite personifications of the abounding qualities of the mighty mother which the Aryan genius had bequeathed to the admiration of man. Parthenope was again to rule at Naples instead of Januarius, and starveling saints and winking madonnas were to restore their usurped altars to the god of the silver bow and the radiant daughter of the foaming wave.

Although the society of *Madre Natura* themselves accepted the allegorical interpretation which the Neo-

Platonists had placed upon the Pagan creeds during the first ages of Christianity, they could not suppose that the populace could ever comprehend an exposition so refined, not to say so fanciful. They guarded, therefore, against the corruptions and abuses of the religion of nature by the entire abolition of the priestly order, and in the principle that every man should be his own priest, they believed they had found the necessary security.

As it was evident that the arrest of Garibaldi could not be kept secret, the General thought it most prudent to be himself the herald of its occurrence, which he announced to the troops in a manner as little discouraging as he could devise. It was difficult to extenuate the consequences of so great a blow, but they were assured that it was not a catastrophe, and would not in the slightest degree affect the execution of the plans previously resolved on. Two or three days later some increase of confidence was occasioned by the authentic intelligence that Garibaldi had been removed from his stern imprisonment at Alessandria, and conveyed to his island-home, Caprera, though still a prisoner.

About this time the General said to Lothair, 'My secretary has occasion to go on an expedition. I shall send a small detachment of cavalry with her, and you will be at its head. She has requested that her husband should have this office, but that is impossible; I cannot spare my best officer. It is your first command, and though I hope it will involve no great difficulty, there is no command that does not require courage and discretion. The distance is not very great, and so long as you are in the mountains you will probably be safe; but in leaving this range

and gaining the southern Apennines, which is your point of arrival, you will have to cross the open country. I do not hear the Papalini are in force there; I believe they have concentrated themselves at Rome, and about Viterbo. If you meet any scouts and reconnoitring parties you will be able to give a good account of them, and probably they will be as little anxious to encounter you as you to meet them. But we must be prepared for everything, and you may be threatened by the enemy in force; in that case you will cross the Italian frontier, in the immediate neighborhood of which you will keep during the passage of the open country, and surrender yourselves and your arms to the authorities. They will not be very severe; but at whatever cost and whatever may be the odds, Theodora must never be a prisoner to the Papalini. You will depart to-morrow at dawn.'

There is nothing so animating, so invigorating alike to body and soul, so truly delicious, as travelling among mountains in the early hours of the day. The freshness of nature falls upon a responsive frame, and the nobility of the scene discards the petty thoughts that pester ordinary life. So felt Captain Muriel, as with every military precaution he conducted his little troop and his precious charge among the winding passes of the Apennines; at first dim in the matin twilight, then soft with incipient day, then coruscating with golden flashes. Sometimes they descended from the austere heights into the sylvan intricacies of chestnut forests, amid the rush of waters and the fragrant stir of ancient trees; and then again ascending to lofty summits, ranges of interminable hills, grey or green, expanded before them, with ever and

anon a glimpse of plains, and sometimes the splendour and the odour of the sea.

Theodora rode a mule, which had been presented to the General by some admirer. It was an animal of remarkable beauty and intelligence, perfectly aware, apparently, of the importance of its present trust, and proud of its rich accoutrements, its padded saddle of crimson velvet, and its silver bells. A couple of troopers formed the advanced guard, and the same number at a certain distance furnished the rear. The body of the detachment, fifteen strong, with the sumpter mules, generally followed Theodora, by whose side, whenever the way permitted, rode their commander. Since he left England Lothair had never been so much alone with Theodora. What struck him most now, as indeed previously at the camp, was that she never alluded to the past. For her there would seem to be no Muriel Towers, no Belmont, no England. You would have supposed that she had been born in the Apennines and had never quitted them. All her conversation was details, political or military. Not that her manner was changed to Lothair. It was not only as kind as before but it was sometimes unusually and even unnecessarily tender, as if she reproached herself for the too frequent and too evident self-engrossment of her thoughts, and wished to intimate to him that though her brain were absorbed, her heart was still gentle and true.

Two hours after noon they halted in a green nook, near a beautiful cascade that descended in a mist down a sylvan cleft, and poured its pellucid stream, for their delightful use, into a natural basin of marble. The men picketed their horses, and their corporal, who was a man of the country and their

guide, distributed their rations. All vied with each other in administering to the comfort and convenience of Theodora, and Lothair hovered about her as a bee about a flower; but she was silent, which he wished to impute to fatigue. But she said she was not at all fatigued, indeed quite fresh. Before they resumed their journey he could not refrain from observing on the beauty of their resting-place. She assented with a pleasing nod, and then resuming her accustomed abstraction she said: 'The more I think, the more I am convinced that the battle is not to be fought in this country, but in France.'

After one more ascent, and that comparatively a gentle one, it was evident that they were gradually emerging from the mountainous region. Their course since their halting lay through a spur of the chief chain they had hitherto pursued, and a little after sunset they arrived at a farm-house, which the corporal informed his Captain was the intended quarter of Theodora for the night, as the horses could proceed no farther without rest. At dawn they were to resume their way, and soon to cross the open country, where danger, if any, was to be anticipated.

The farmer was frightened when he was summoned from his house by a party of armed men; but having some good ducats given him in advance, and being assured they were all Christians, he took heart and laboured to do what they desired. Theodora duly found herself in becoming quarters, and a sentry was mounted at her residence. The troopers, who had been quite content to wrap themselves in their cloaks and pass the night in the air, were pleased to find no despicable accommodation in the out-buildings of the farm, and still more with the proffered

vintage of their host. As for Lothair, he enveloped himself in his mantle and threw himself on a bed of sacks, with a truss of Indian corn for his pillow, and though he began by musing over Theodora, in a few minutes he was immersed in that profound and dreamless sleep which a life of action and mountain air combined can alone secure.

CHAPTER LV.

A Patriotic Pilgrimage.

THE open country extending from the Apennines to the very gates of Rome, and which they had now to cross, was in general a desert; a plain clothed with a coarse vegetation, and undulating with an interminable series of low and uncouth mounds, without any of the grace of form which always attends the disposition of nature. Nature had not created them. They were the offspring of man and time, and of their rival powers of destruction. Ages of civilisation were engulfed in this drear expanse. They were the tombs of empires and the sepulchres of contending races. The Campagna proper has at least the grace of aqueducts to break its monotony, and everywhere the cerulean spell of distance; but in this grim solitude antiquity has left only the memory of its violence and crimes, and nothing is beautiful except the sky.

The orders of the General to direct their course as much as possible in the vicinity of the Italian frontier, though it lengthened their journey, somewhat mitigated its dreariness, and an hour after noon, after

traversing some flinty fields, they observed in the distance an olive wood, beneath the pale shade of which, and among whose twisted branches and contorted roots, they had contemplated finding a halting-place. But here the advanced guard observed already an encampment, and one of them rode back to report the discovery.

A needless alarm; for after a due reconnaissance, they were ascertained to be friends, a band of patriots about to join the General in his encampment among the mountains. They reported that a division of the Italian army was assembled in force upon the frontier, but that several regiments had already signified to their commanders that they would not fight against Garibaldi or his friends. They confirmed also the news that the great leader himself was a prisoner at Caprera; that although his son Menotti by his command had withdrawn from Nerola, his force was really increased by the junction of Ghirelli and the Roman legion, twelve hundred strong, and that five hundred riflemen would join the General in the course of the week.

A little before sunset they had completed the passage of the open country, and had entered the opposite branch of the Apennines, which they had long observed in the distance. After wandering among some rocky ground, they entered a defile amid hills covered with ilex, and thence emerging found themselves in a valley of some expanse and considerable cultivation; bright crops, vineyards in which the vine was married to the elm, orchards full of fruit, and groves of olive; in the distance blue hills that were becoming dark in the twilight, and in the centre of the plain, upon a gentle and wooded elevation, a vast

pile of building, the exact character of which at this hour it was difficult to recognise, for even as Theodora mentioned to Lothair that they now beheld the object of their journey, the twilight seemed to vanish and the stars glistened in the dark heavens.

Though the building seemed so near, it was yet a considerable time before they reached the wooded hill, and though its ascent was easy, it was night before they halted in face of a huge gate flanked by high stone walls. A single light in one of the windows of the vast pile which it enclosed was the only evidence of human habitation.

The corporal sounded a bugle, and immediately the light moved and noises were heard; the opening of the hall doors, and then the sudden flame of torches, and the advent of many feet. The great gate slowly opened, and a steward and several serving men appeared. The steward addressed Theodora and Lothair, and invited them to dismount and enter what now appeared to be a garden with statues and terraces and fountains and rows of cypress, its infinite dilapidation not being recognisable in the deceptive hour; and he informed the escort that their quarters were prepared for them, to which they were at once attended. Guiding their Captain and his charge, they soon approached a double flight of steps, and ascending, reached the main terrace from which the building immediately rose. It was, in truth, a castle of the middle ages, on which a Roman prince, at the commencement of the last century, had engrafted the character of one of those vast and ornate villas then the mode, but its original character still asserted itself, and notwithstanding its Tuscan basement and its Ionic pilasters, its rich pediments and delicate volutes,

in the distant landscape it still seemed a fortress in the commanding position which became the residence of a feudal chief.

They entered through a Palladian vestibule a hall which they felt must be of huge dimensions, though with the aid of a single torch it was impossible to trace its limits, either of extent or of elevation. Then bowing before them, and lighting as it were their immediate steps, the steward guided them down a long and lofty corridor, which led to the entrance of several chambers, all vast, with little furniture, but their walls covered with pictures. At length he opened a door and ushered them into a saloon, which was in itself bright and glowing, but of which the lively air was heightened by its contrast with the preceding scene. It was lofty, and hung with faded satin in gilded panels still bright. An ancient chandelier of Venetian crystal hung illumined from the painted ceiling, and on the silver dogs of the marble hearth a fresh block of cedar had just been thrown and blazed with aromatic light.

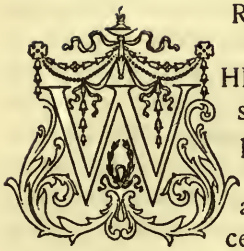
A lady came forward and embraced Theodora, and then greeted Lothair with cordiality. 'We must dine to-day even later than you do in London,' said the Princess of Tivoli, 'but we have been expecting you these two hours.' Then she drew Theodora aside, and said, 'He is here; but you must be tired, my best beloved. As some wise man said: "Business to-morrow."'

'No, no,' said Theodora; 'now, now: I am never tired. The only thing that exhausts me is suspense.'

'It shall be so. At present I will take you away to shake the dust off your armour; and, Serafino, attend to Captain Muriel.'

CHAPTER LVI.

Romolo Colonna.



HEN they assembled again in the saloon there was an addition to their party in the person of a gentleman of distinguished appearance. His age could hardly have much exceeded that of thirty, but time had agitated his truly Roman countenance, one which we now find only in consular and imperial busts, or in the chance visage of a Roman shepherd or a Neapolitan bandit. He was a shade above the middle height, with a frame of well-knit symmetry. His proud head was proudly placed on broad shoulders, and neither time nor indulgence had marred his slender waist. His dark brown hair was short and hyacinthine, close to his white forehead, and naturally showing his small ears. He wore no whiskers, and his moustache was limited to the centre of his upper lip.

When Theodora entered and offered him her hand he pressed it to his lips with gravity and proud homage, and then their hostess said, 'Captain Muriel, let me present you to a Prince who will not bear his titles, and whom, therefore, I must call by his name —Romolo Colonna.'

The large folding doors, richly painted and gilt, though dim from neglect and time, and sustained by columns of precious marbles, were suddenly opened and revealed another saloon, in which was a round table brightly lighted, and to which the Princess invited her friends.

Their conversation at dinner was lively and sustained; the travels of the last two days formed a natural part, and were apposite to commence with, but they were soon engrossed in the great subject of their lives; and Colonna, who had left Rome only four-and-twenty hours, gave them interesting details of the critical condition of that capital. When the repast was concluded the Princess rose, and, accompanied by Lothair, re-entered the saloon, but Theodora and Colonna lingered behind, and finally seating themselves at the farthest end of the apartment in which they had dined, became engaged in earnest conversation.

'You have seen a great deal since we first met at Belmont,' said the Princess to Lothair.

'It seems to me now,' said Lothair, 'that I knew as much of life then as I did of the stars above us, about whose purposes and fortunes I used to puzzle myself.'

'And might have remained in that ignorance. The great majority of men exist but do not live, like Italy in the last century. The power of the passions, the force of the will, the creative energy of the imagination, these make life, and reveal to us a world of which the million are entirely ignorant. You have been fortunate in your youth to have become acquainted with a great woman. It develops all a man's powers, and gives him a thousand talents.'

'I often think,' said Lothair, 'that I have neither powers nor talents, but am drifting without an orbit.'

'Into infinite space,' said the Princess. 'Well, one might do worse than that. But it is not so. In the long run your nature will prevail, and you will fulfil your organic purpose; but you will accomplish your ends with a completeness which can only be secured by the culture and development you are now experiencing.'

'And what is my nature?' said Lothair. 'I wish you would tell me.'

'Has not the divine Theodora told you?'

'She has told me many things, but not that.'

'How then could I know,' said the Princess, 'if she has not discovered it?'

'But perhaps she has discovered it,' said Lothair.

'Oh! then she would tell you,' said the Princess, 'for she is the soul of truth.'

'But she is also the soul of kindness, and she might wish to spare my feelings.'

'Well, that is very modest, and I dare say not affected. For there is no man, however gifted, even however conceited, who has any real confidence in himself until he has acted.'

'Well, we shall soon act,' said Lothair, 'and then I suppose I shall know my nature.'

'In time,' said the Princess, 'and with the continued inspiration of friendship.'

'But you too are a great friend of Theodora?'

'Although a woman. I see you are laughing at female friendships, and, generally speaking, there is foundation for the general sneer. I will own, for my part, I have every female weakness, and in excess. I am vain, I am curious, I am jealous, and I am

envious; but I adore Theodora. I reconcile my feelings towards her and my disposition in this way. It is not friendship, it is worship. And indeed there are moments when I sometimes think she is one of those beautiful divinities that we once worshipped in this land, and who, when they listened to our prayers, at least vouchsafed that our country should not be the terrible wilderness that you crossed this day.'

In the meantime Colonna, with folded arms and eyes fixed on the ground, was listening to Theodora.

'Thus you see,' she continued, 'it comes to this: Rome can only be freed by the Romans. He looks upon the secret societies of his own country as he does upon universal suffrage: a wild beast, and dangerous, but which may be watched and tamed and managed by the police. He listens, but he plays with them. He temporises. At the bottom of his heart, his Italian blood despises the Gauls. It must be something deeper and more touching than this. Rome must appeal to him, and in the ineffable name.'

'It has been uttered before,' said Colonna, looking up at his companion, 'and——' And he hesitated.

'And in vain you would say,' said Theodora. 'Not so. There was a martyrdom, but the blood of Felice baptised the new birth of Italian life. But I am not thinking of bloodshed. Had it not been for the double intrigues of the Savoyards it need not then have been shed. We bear him no ill will, at least not now, and we can make great offers. Make them. The revolution in Gaul is ever a mimicry of Italian thought and life. Their great affair of the last century, which they have so marred and muddled, would never have occurred had it not been for Tuscan reform; 1848 was the echo of our societies; and the Seine

will never be disturbed if the Tiber flows unruffled. Let him consent to Roman freedom, and *Madre Natura* will guarantee him against Lutetian barricades.'

'It is only the offer of Mary Anne in another form,' said Colonna.

'Guarantee the dynasty,' said Theodora. 'There is the point. He can trust us. Emperors and kings break treaties without remorse, but he knows that what is registered by the most ancient power in the world is sacred.'

'Can republicans guarantee dynasties?' said Colonna, shaking his head.

'Why, what is a dynasty, when we are dealing with eternal things? The casualties of life compared with infinite space. Rome is eternal. Centuries of the most degrading and foreign priestcraft, enervating rites brought in by Heliogabalus and the Syrian emperors, have failed to destroy her. Dynasties! Why, even in our dark servitude we have seen Merovingian and Carlovingian kings, and Capets and Valois and Bourbons and now Buonapartes. They have disappeared, and will disappear like Orgetorix and the dynasties of the time of Cæsar. What we want is Rome free. Do not you see that everything has been preparing for that event? This monstrous masquerade of United Italy, what is it but an initiatory ceremony to prove that Italy without Rome is a series of provinces? Establish the Roman republic, and the Roman race will, as before, conquer them in detail. And when the Italians are thus really united, what will become of the Gauls? Why, the first Buonaparte said that if Italy were really united the Gauls would have no chance. And he was a good judge of such things.'

'What would you have me do, then?' said Colonna.

'See him, see him at once. Say everything that I have said, and say it better. His disposition is with us. Convenience, all political propriety, counsel and would justify his abstinence. A return to Rome would seem weak, fitful, capricious, and would prove that his previous retirement was ill-considered and ill-informed. It would disturb and alarm Europe. But you have, nevertheless, to fight against great odds. It is *Madre Natura* against St. Peter's. Never was the abomination of the world so active as at present. It is in the very throes of its fell despair. To save itself, it would put poison in the Eucharist.'

'And if I fail?' said Colonna.

'You will not fail. On the whole his interest lies on our side.'

'The sacerdotal influences are very strong there. When the calculation of interest is fine, a word, a glance, sometimes a sigh, a tear, may have a fatal effect.'

'All depends upon him,' said Theodora. 'If he were to disappear from the stage, interference would be impossible.'

'But he is on the stage, and apparently will remain.'

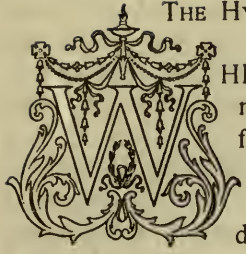
'A single life should not stand between Rome and freedom.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that Romolo Colonna should go to Paris and free his country.'

CHAPTER LVII.

The Hymn of Roman Liberty.



HEN Captain Muriel and his detachment returned to the camp, they found that the force had been not inconsiderably increased in their absence, while the tidings of the disposition of the Italian army, brought by the recruits and the deserters from the royal standard, cherished the hopes of the troops, and stimulated their desire for action. Theodora had been far more communicative during their journey back than in that of her departure. She was less absorbed, and had resumed that serene yet ever sympathising character which was one of her charms. Without going into detail, she mentioned more than once to Lothair how relieved she felt by Colonna accepting the mission to Paris. He was a person of so much influence, she said, and of such great judgment and resource. She augured the most satisfactory results from his presence on the main scene of action.

Time passed rapidly at the camp. When a life of constant activity is combined with routine, the hours fly. Neither letter nor telegram arrived from Colonna, and neither was expected; and yet Theodora heard from him, and even favourably. One day, as she was

going the rounds with her husband, a young soldier, a new recruit, approached her, and pressing to his lips a branch of the olive tree, presented it to her. On another occasion when she returned to her tent, she found a bunch of fruit from the same tree, though not quite ripe, which showed that the cause of peace had not only progressed but had almost matured. All these communications sustained her sanguine disposition, and full of happy confidence she laboured with unceasing and inspiring energy, so that when the looked-for signal came they might be prepared to obey it, and rapidly gather the rich fruition of their glorious hopes.

While she was in this mood of mind a scout arrived from Nerola, bringing news that a brigade of the French army had positively embarked at Marseilles, and might be hourly expected at Civita Vecchia. The news was absolute. The Italian Consul at Marseilles had telegraphed to his government both when the first regiment was on board, and when the last had embarked. Copies of these telegrams had been forwarded instantly by a secret friend to the volunteers on the southern frontier.

When Theodora heard this news she said nothing, but, turning pale, she quitted the group round the General and hastened to her own tent. She told her attendant, the daughter of the custom-house officer at Narni, and a true child of the mountains, that no one must approach her, not even Colonel Campian, and the girl sat without the tent at its entrance, dressed in her many-coloured garments, with fiery eyes and square white teeth, and her dark hair braided with gold coins and covered with a long white kerchief of perfect cleanliness. She had a poniard at her side

and a revolver in her hand, and she would have used both weapons sooner than that her mistress should be disobeyed.

Alone in her tent, Theodora fell upon her knees, and lifting up her hands to heaven and bowing her head to the earth, she said: 'O God! whom I have ever worshipped, God of justice and of truth, receive the agony of my soul!'

And on the earth she remained for hours in despair.

Night came and it brought no solace, and the day returned, but to her it brought no light. Theodora was no longer seen. The soul of the camp seemed extinct. The mien of majesty that ennobled all; the winning smile that rewarded the rifleman at his practice and the sapper at his toil; the inciting word that reanimated the recruit and recalled to the veteran the glories of Sicilian struggles—all vanished, all seemed spiritless and dull, and the armourer clinked his forge as if he were the heartless hireling of a king.

In this state of moral discomfiture there was one person who did not lose his head, and this was the General. Calm, collected, and critical, he surveyed the situation and indicated the possible contingencies. 'Our best if not our only chance,' he said to Colonel Campian, 'is this: that the Italian army now gathered in force upon the frontier should march to Rome and arrive there before the French. Whatever then happens, we shall at least get rid of the great imposture, but in all probability the French and the Italians will fight. In that case I shall join the Savoyards, and in the confusion we may do some business yet.'

'This embarkation,' said the Colonel, 'explains the gathering of the Italians on the frontier. They must have foreseen this event at Florence. They never can submit to another French occupation. It would upset their throne. The question is, who will be at Rome first.'

'Just so,' said the General; 'and as it is an affair upon which all depends, and is entirely beyond my control, I think I shall now take a nap.' So saying he turned into his tent, and, in five minutes, this brave and exact man, but in whom the muscular development far exceeded the nervous, was slumbering without a dream.

Civita Vecchia was so near at hand, and the scouts of the General were so numerous and able, that he soon learnt the French had not yet arrived, and another day elapsed and still no news of the French. But, on the afternoon of the following day, the startling but authentic information arrived, that, after the French army having embarked and remained two days in port, the original orders had been countermanded, and the troops had absolutely debarked.

There was a cheer in the camp when the news was known, and Theodora started from her desolation, surprised that there could be in such a scene a sound of triumph. Then there was another cheer, and though she did not move, but remained listening and leaning on her arm, the light returned to her eyes. The cheer was repeated, and there were steps about her tent. She caught the voice of Lothair speaking to her attendant, and adjuring her to tell her mistress immediately that there was good news, and that the French troops had debarked. Then she heard her husband calling 'Theodora'!

The camp became a scene of excitement and festivity which, in general, only succeeds some signal triumph. The troops lived always in the air, except in the hours of night, when the atmosphere of the mountains in the late autumn is dangerous. At present they formed groups and parties in the vicinity of the tents; there was their gay canteen and there their humorous kitchen. The man of the Gulf with his Venetian banter, and the Sicilian with his scaramouch tricks, got on very well with the gentle and polished Tuscan, and could amuse without offending the high Roman soul; but there were some quips and cranks and sometimes some antics which were not always relished by the simpler men from the islands, and the offended eye of a Corsican sometimes seemed to threaten 'vendetta.'

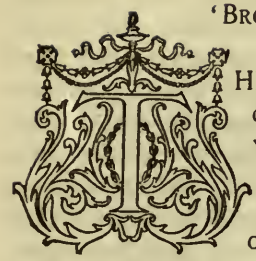
About sunset, Colonel Campian led forth Theodora. She was in female attire, and her long hair, restrained only by a fillet, reached nearly to the ground. Her Olympian brow seemed distended; a phosphoric light glittered in her Hellenic eyes; a deep pink spot burnt upon each of those cheeks usually so immaculately fair.

The General and the chief officers gathered round her with their congratulations, but she would visit all the quarters. She spoke to the men in all the dialects of that land of many languages. The men of the Gulf, in general of gigantic stature, dropped their merry Venetian stories and fell down on their knees and kissed the hem of her garment; the Scaramouch forgot his tricks, and wept as he would to the Madonna; Tuscany and Rome made speeches worthy of the Arno and the Forum; and the Corsicans and the islanders unsheathed their poniards and brandished

them in the air, which is their mode of denoting affectionate devotion. As the night advanced, the crescent moon glittering above the Apennines, Theodora, attended by the whole staff, having visited all the troops, stopped at the chief fire of the camp, and in a voice which might have maddened nations sang the hymn of Roman liberty, the whole army ranged in ranks along the valley joining in the solemn and triumphant chorus.

CHAPTER LVIII.

'Brothers! to Rome!'



HIS exaltation of feeling in the camp did not evaporate. All felt that they were on the eve of some great event, and that the hour was at hand. And it was in this state of enthusiasm that couriers arrived with the intelligence that Garibaldi had escaped from Caprera, that he had reached Nerola in safety, and was in command of the assembled forces; and that the General was, without loss of time, to strike his camp, join the main body at a given place, and then march to Rome.

The breaking-up of the camp was as the breaking-up of a long frost and the first scent of spring. There was a brightness in every man's face and a gay elasticity in all their movements. But when the order of the day informed them that they must prepare for instant combat, and that in eight-and-forty hours they would probably be in face of the enemy, the hearts of the young recruits fluttered with strange excitement, and the veterans nodded to each other with grim delight.

It was nearly midnight when the troops quitted the valley through a defile in an opposite direction to

the pass by which they had entered it. It was a bright night. Colonel Campian had the command of the division in advance, which was five hundred strong. After the defile, the country though hilly was comparatively open, and here the advanced guard was to halt until the artillery and cavalry had effected the passage, and this was the most laborious and difficult portion of the march; but all was well considered, and all went right. The artillery and cavalry by sunrise had joined the advanced guard who were bivouacking in the rocky plain, and about noon the main columns of the infantry began to deploy from the heights, and in a short time the whole force was in the field. Soon after this some of the skirmishers who had been sent forward returned, and reported the enemy in force and in a strong position, commanding the intended route of the invading force. On this the General resolved to halt for a few hours, and rest and refresh the troops, and to recommence their march after sunset, so that, without effort, they might be in presence of the enemy by dawn.

Lothair had been separated from Theodora during this to him novel and exciting scene. She had accompanied her husband, but when the whole force advanced in battle array, the General had desired that she should accompany the staff. They advanced through the night, and by dawn they were fairly in the open country. In the distance, and in the middle of the rough and undulating plain, was a round hill with an ancient city, for it was a bishop's see, built all about and over it. It would have looked like a gigantic beehive, had it not been for a long convent on the summit, flanked by some stone pines, as we see in the pictures of Gaspar and Claude.

Between this city and the invading force, though not in a direct line, was posted the enemy in a strong position; their right wing protected by one of the mounds common in the plain, and their left backed by an olive wood of considerable extent, and which grew on the last rocky spur of the mountains. They were therefore, as regards the plain, on commanding ground. The strength of the two forces was not unequal, and the Papal troops were not to be despised, consisting among others of a detachment of the legion of Antibes and the Zouaves. They had artillery, which was well posted.

The General surveyed the scene, for which he was not unprepared. Disposing his troops in positions in which they were as much protected as possible from the enemy's fire, he opened upon them a fierce and continuous cannonade, while he ordered Colonel Campian and eight hundred men to fall back among the hills, and following a circuitous path, which had been revealed by a shepherd, gain the spur of the mountains and attack the enemy in their rear through the olive wood. It was calculated that this movement, if successful, would require about three hours, and the General for that period of the time had to occupy the enemy and his own troops with what were in reality feint attacks.

When the calculated time had elapsed, the General became anxious, and his glass was never from his eye. He was posted on a convenient ridge, and the wind, which was high this day from the sea, frequently cleared the field from the volumes of smoke; so his opportunities of observation were good. But the three hours passed, and there was no sign of the approach of Campian, and he ordered Sarano

with his division to advance towards the mound and occupy the attention of the right wing of the enemy; but very shortly after Lothair had carried this order, and four hours having elapsed, the General observed some confusion in the left wing of the enemy, and instantly countermanding the order, commanded a general attack in line. The troops charged with enthusiasm, but they were encountered with a resolution as determined. At first they carried the mound, broke the enemy's centre, and were mixed up with their great guns; but the enemy fiercely rallied, and the invaders were repulsed. The Papal troops retained their position, and their opponents were in disorder on the plain and a little dismayed. It was at this moment that Theodora rushed forward, and waving a sword in one hand, and in the other the standard of the Republic, exclaimed, 'Brothers, to Rome!'

This sight inflamed their faltering hearts, which after all were rather confounded than dismayed. They formed and rallied round her, and charged with renewed energy at the very moment that Campian had brought the force of his division on the enemy's rear. A panic came over the Papal troops, thus doubly assailed, and their rout was complete. They retreated in the utmost disorder to Viterbo, which they abandoned that night and hurried to Rome.

At the last moment, when the victory was no longer doubtful, and all were in full retreat or in full pursuit, a Zouave, in wantonness firing his weapon before he threw it away, sent a random shot which struck Theodora, and she fell. Lothair, who had never left her during the battle, was at her side in a moment, and a soldier, who had also marked

the fatal shot; and, strange to say, so hot and keen was the pursuit, that though a moment before they seemed to be in the very thick of the strife, they almost instantaneously found themselves alone, or rather with no companions than the wounded near them. She looked at Lothair, but at first could not speak. She seemed stunned, but soon murmured, 'Go, go; you are wanted.'

At this moment the General rode up with some of his staff. His countenance was elate and his eye sparkled with fire. But catching the figure of Lothair kneeling on the field, he reined in his charger and said, 'What is this?' Then looking more closely, he instantly dismounted, and muttering to himself, 'This mars the victory,' he was at Theodora's side.

A slight smile came over her when she recognised the General, and she faintly pressed his hand, and then said again, 'Go, go; you are all wanted.'

'None of us are wanted. The day is won; we must think of you.'

'Is it won?' she murmured.

'Complete.'

'I die content.'

'Who talks of death?' said the General. 'This is a wound, but I have had some worse. What we must think of now are remedies. I passed an ambulance this moment. Run for it,' he said to his aide-de-camp. 'We must staunch the wound at once; but it is only a mile to the city, and then we shall find everything, for we were expected. I will ride on, and there shall be proper attendance ready before you arrive. You will conduct our friend to the city,' he said to Lothair, 'and be of good courage, as I am.'

CHAPTER LIX.

A Solemn Promise.

HE troops were rushing through the gates of the city when the General rode up. There was a struggling and stifling crowd; cheers and shrieks. It was that moment of wild fruition, when the master is neither recognised nor obeyed. It is not easy to take a bone out of a dog's mouth; nevertheless the presence of the General in time prevailed, something like order was established, and before the ambulance could arrive, a guard had been appointed to receive it, and the ascent to the monastery, where a quarter was prepared, kept clear.

During the progress to the city Theodora never spoke, but she seemed stunned rather than suffering; and once, when Lothair, who was walking by her side, caught her glance with his sorrowful and anxious face, she put forth her hand and pressed his.

The ascent to the convent was easy, and the advantages of air and comparative tranquillity, which the place offered, counterbalanced the risk of postponing, for a very brief space, the examination of the wound.

They laid her on their arrival on a large bed, without poles or canopy, in a lofty white-washed room of considerable dimensions, clean and airy, with high open windows. There was no furniture in the room except a chair, a table, and a crucifix. Lothair took her in his arms and laid her on the bed; and the common soldier who had hitherto assisted him, a giant in stature with a beard a foot long, stood by the bedside crying like a child. The chief surgeon almost at the same moment arrived with an aide-de-camp of the General, and her faithful female attendant, and in a few minutes her husband, himself wounded and covered with dust.

The surgeon at once requested that all should withdraw except her devoted maid, and they waited his report without, in that deep sad silence which will not despair, and yet dares not hope.

When the wound had been examined and probed and dressed, Theodora in a faint voice said, 'Is it desperate?'

'Not desperate,' said the surgeon, 'but serious. All depends upon your perfect tranquillity, of mind as well as body.'

'Well, I am here and cannot move; and as for my mind, I am not only serene but happy.'

'Then we shall get through this,' said the surgeon encouragingly.

'I do not like you to stay with me,' said Theodora. 'There are other sufferers besides myself.'

'My orders are not to quit you,' said the surgeon, 'but I can be of great use within these walls. I shall return when the restorative has had its effect. But remember, if I be wanted, I am always here.'

Soon after this Theodora fell into a gentle slumber,

and after two hours woke refreshed. The countenance of the surgeon when he again visited her was less troubled; it was hopeful.

The day was now beginning to decline; notwithstanding the scenes of tumult and violence near at hand, all was here silent; and the breeze, which had been strong during the whole day, but which blew from the sea, and was very soft, played gratefully upon the pale countenance of the sufferer. Suddenly she said, 'What is that?'

And they answered and said, 'We heard nothing.'

'I hear the sound of great guns,' said Theodora.

And they listened, and in a moment both the surgeon and the maid heard the sound of distant ordnance.

'The Liberator is at hand,' said the maid.

'I dare say,' said the surgeon.

'No;' said Theodora looking distressed. 'The sounds do not come from his direction. Go and see, Dolores; ask, and tell me what are these sounds.'

The surgeon was sitting by her side, and occasionally touching her pulse, or wiping the slight foam from her brow, when Dolores returned and said, 'Lady, the sounds are the great guns of Civita Vecchia.'

A deadly change came over the countenance of Theodora, and the surgeon looked alarmed. He would have given her some restorative, but she refused it. 'No, kind friend,' she said; 'it is finished. I have just received a wound more fatal than the shot in the field this morning. The French are at Rome. Tell me, kind friend, how long do you think I may live?'

The surgeon felt her pulse; his look was gloomy. 'In such a case as yours,' he said, 'the patient is the best judge.'

'I understand,' she said. 'Send then at once for my husband.'

He was at hand, for his wound had been dressed in the convent, and he came to Theodora with his arm in a sling, but with the attempt of a cheerful visage.

In the meantime, Lothair, after having heard the first, and by no means hopeless, bulletin of the surgeon, had been obliged to leave the convent to look after his men, and having seen them in quarters and made his report to the General, he obtained permission to return to the convent and ascertain the condition of Theodora. Arrived there, he heard that she had had refreshing slumber, and that her husband was now with her, and a ray of hope lighted up the darkness of his soul. He was walking up and down the refectory of the convent with that sickening restlessness which attends impending and yet uncertain sorrow, when Colonel Campian entered the apartment and beckoned to him.

There was an expression in his face which appalled Lothair, and he was about to enquire after Theodora, when his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth and he could not speak. The Colonel shook his head, and said in a low, hollow voice, 'She wishes to see you, and alone. Come.'

Theodora was sitting in the bed propped up by cushions when Lothair entered, and as her wound was internal, there was no evidence of her sufferings. The distressful expression of her face when she heard the great guns of Civita Vecchia had passed away. It was serious, but it was serene. She bade her maid leave the chamber, and then she said to Lothair, 'It is the last time I shall speak to

you, and I wish that we should be alone. There is something much on my mind at this moment, and you can relieve it.'

'Adored being,' murmured Lothair with streaming eyes, 'there is no wish of yours that I will not fulfil.'

'I know your life, for you have told it me, and you are true. I know your nature; it is gentle and brave, but perhaps too susceptible. I wished it to be susceptible only of the great and good. Mark me: I have a vague but strong conviction that there will be another, and a more powerful, attempt to gain you to the Church of Rome. If I have ever been to you, as you have sometimes said, an object of kind thoughts, if not a fortunate, at least a faithful, friend; promise me now, at this hour of trial, with all the solemnity that becomes the moment, that you will never enter that communion.'

Lothair would have spoken, but his voice was choked, and he could only press her hand and bow his head.

'But promise me,' said Theodora.

'I promise,' said Lothair.

'And now,' she said, 'embrace me, for I wish that your spirit should be upon me as mine departs.'

CHAPTER LX.

The Meeting at Rome.

T WAS a November day in Rome, and the sky was as gloomy as the heaven of London. The wind moaned through the silent streets, deserted except by soldiers. The shops were shut, not a civilian or a priest could be seen. The Corso was occupied by the Swiss Guard and Zouaves, with artillery ready to sweep it at a moment's notice. Six of the city gates were shut and barricaded with barrels full of earth. Troops and artillery were also posted in several of the principal piazzas, and on some commanding heights, and St. Peter's itself was garrisoned.

And yet these were the arrangements rather of panic than precaution. The utmost dismay pervaded the council-chamber of the Vatican. Since the news had arrived of the debarking of the French troops at Marseilles, all hope of interference had expired. It was clear that Berwick had been ultimately foiled, and his daring spirit and teeming device were the last hope, as they were the ablest representation, of Roman audacity and stratagem. The Revolutionary Committee, whose abiding-place or agents never could

be traced or discovered, had posted every part of the city during the night with their manifesto, announcing that the hour had arrived; an attempt, partially successful, had been made to blow up the barracks of the Zouaves; and the Cardinal Secretary was in possession of information that an insurrection was immediate, and that the city would be fired in four different quarters.

The Pope had escaped from the Vatican to the Castle of St. Angelo, where he was secure, and where his courage could be sustained by the presence of the Noble Guard with their swords always drawn. The six score of Monsignori, who in their different offices form what is styled the Court of Rome, had either accompanied his Holiness, or prudently secreted themselves in the strongest palaces and convents at their command. Later in the day, news arrived of the escape of Garibaldi from Caprera; he was said to be marching on the city, and only five-and-twenty miles distant. There appeared another proclamation from the Revolutionary Committee, mysteriously posted under the very noses of the guards and police, postponing the insurrection till the arrival of the Liberator.

The Papal cause seemed hopeless. There was a general feeling throughout the city and all classes, that this time it was to be an affair of Alaric or Genseric, or the Constable of Bourbon; no negotiations, no compromises, no conventions, but slaughter, havoc, a great judicial devastation, that was to extirpate all signs and memories of Mediæval and Semitic Rome, and restore and renovate the inheritance of the true offspring of the she-wolf. The very aspect of the place itself was sinister. Whether it were the dulness of the dark sky, or the frown of *Madre Na-*

tura herself, but the old Seven Hills seemed to look askance. The haughty Capitol, impatient of its chapels, sighed once more for triumphs; and the proud Palatine, remembering the Cæsars, glanced with imperial contempt on the palaces of the Papal princelings that, in the course of ignominious ages, had been constructed out of the exhaustless womb of its still sovereign ruin. The Jews in their quarter spoke nothing, but exchanged a curious glance, as if to say, 'Has it come at last? And will they indeed serve her as she served Sion?'

This dreadful day at last passed, followed by as dreadful a night, and then another day equally gloomy, equally silent, equally panic-stricken. Even insurrection would have been a relief amid the horrible and wearing suspense. On the third day the Government made some wild arrests of the wrong persons, and then came out a fresh proclamation from the Revolutionary Committee, directing the Romans to make no move until the advanced guard of Garibaldi had appeared upon Monte Mario. About this time the routed troops of the Pope arrived in confusion from Viterbo, and of course extenuated their discomfiture by exaggerating the strength of their opponents. According to them they had encountered not less than ten thousand men, who now having joined the still greater force of Garibaldi, were in full march on the city.

The members of the Papal party who showed the greatest spirit and the highest courage at this trying conjuncture, were the Roman ladies and their foreign friends. They scraped lint for the troops as incessantly as they offered prayers to the Virgin. Some of them were trained nurses, and they were training

others to tend the sick and wounded. They organised a hospital service, and when the wounded arrived from Viterbo, notwithstanding the rumours of incendiarism and massacre, they came forth from their homes, and proceeded in companies, with no male attendants but armed men, to the discharge of their self-appointed public duties. There were many foreigners in the Papal ranks, and the sympathies and services of the female visitors to Rome were engaged for their countrymen. Princesses of France and Flanders might be seen by the tressel beds of many a suffering soldier of Dauphiné and Brabant; but there were numerous subjects of Queen Victoria in the Papal ranks: some Englishmen, several Scotchmen, many Irish. For them the English ladies had organised a special service. Lady St. Jerome, with unflagging zeal, presided over this department; and the superior of the sisterhood of mercy, that shrank from no toil, and feared no danger in the fulfilment of those sacred duties of pious patriots, was Miss Arundel.

She was leaning over the bed of one who had been cut down in the olive wood by a sabre of Campian's force, when a peal of artillery was heard. She thought that her hour had arrived, and the assault had commenced.

'Most Holy Mary!' she exclaimed, 'sustain me.'

There was another peal, and it was repeated, and again and again at regular intervals.

'That is not a battle, it is a salute,' murmured the wounded soldier.

And he was right; it was the voice of the great guns telling that the French had arrived.

The consternation of the Revolutionary Committee, no longer sustained by Colonna, absent in France,

was complete. Had the advanced guard of Garibaldi been in sight, it might still have been the wisest course to rise; but Monte Mario was not yet peopled by them, and an insurrection against the Papal troops, reanimated by the reported arrival of the French, and increased in numbers by the fugitives from Viterbo, would have been certainly a rash and probably a hopeless effort. And so, in the midst of confused and hesitating councils, the first division of the French force arrived at the gates of Rome, and marched into the gloomy and silent city.

Since the interference of St. Peter and St. Paul against Alaric, the Papacy had never experienced a more miraculous interposition in its favour. Shortly after this the wind changed, and the sky became serene; a sunbeam played on the flashing cross of St. Peter's; the Pope left the Castle of Angelo, and returned to the Quirinal; the Noble Guard sheathed their puissant blades; the six score of Monsignori reappeared in all their busy haunts and stately offices; and the Court of Rome, no longer despairing of the Republic, and with a spirit worthy of the Senate after Cannæ, ordered the whole of its forces into the field to combat its invaders, with the prudent addition, in order to ensure a triumph, of a brigade of French infantry armed with *chassepots*.

Garibaldi, who was really at hand, hearing of these events, fell back on Monte Rotondo, about fifteen miles from the city, and took up a strong position. He was soon attacked by his opponents, and defeated with considerable slaughter, and forced to fly. The Papal troops returned to Rome in triumph, but with many wounded. The Roman ladies and their friends resumed their noble duties with enthusiasm. The am-

bulances were apportioned to the different hospitals, and the services of all were required. Our own countrymen had suffered severely, but the skill and energy and gentle care of Clare Arundel and her companions only increased with the greater calls upon their beautiful and sublime virtues.

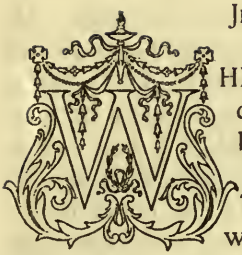
A woman came to Miss Arundel and told her that in one of the ambulances was a young man whom they could not make out. He was severely wounded, and had now swooned; but they had reason to believe he was an Englishman. Would she see him and speak to him? And she went.

The person who had summoned her was a woman of much beauty, not an uncommon quality in Rome, and of some majesty of mien, as little rare in that city. She was said, at the time when some enquiry was made, to be Maria Serafina de Angelis, the wife of a tailor in the Ripetta.

The ambulance was in the courtyard of the hospital of the Santissima Trinitá di Pellegrini. The woman pointed to it, and then went away. There was only one person in the ambulance; the rest had been taken into the hospital, but he had been left because he was in a swoon, and they were trying to restore him. Those around the ambulance made room for Miss Arundel as she approached, and she beheld a young man, covered with the stains of battle, and severely wounded; but his countenance was uninjured though insensible. His eyes were closed, and his auburn hair fell in clusters on his white forehead. The sister of mercy touched the pulse to ascertain whether there yet was life, but, in the very act, her own frame became agitated, and the colour left her cheek, as she recognised — Lothair.

CHAPTER LXI.

Jesuitic Influence.



HEN Lothair in some degree regained consciousness, he found himself in bed. The chamber was lofty and dim, and had once been splendid. Thoughtfulness had invested it with an air of comfort rare under Italian roofs. The fagots sparkled on the hearth, the light from the windows was veiled with hangings, and the draughts from the tall doors guarded against by screens. And by his bedside there were beautiful flowers, and a crucifix, and a silver bell.

Where was he? He looked up at the velvet canopy above, and then at the pictures that covered the walls, but there was no familiar aspect. He remembered nothing since he was shot down in the field of Mentana, and even that imperfectly.

And there had been another battle before that, followed by a catastrophe still more dreadful. When had all this happened, and where? He tried to move his bandaged form, but he had no strength, and his mind seemed weaker than his frame. But he was soon sensible that he was not alone. A veiled figure gently lifted him, and another one refreshed his pillows. He spoke, or tried to speak, but one of them pressed

her finger to her shrouded lips, and he willingly relapsed into the silence which he had hardly strength enough to break.

And sometimes these veiled and gliding ministers brought him sustenance and sometimes remedies, and he complied with all their suggestions, but with absolute listlessness; and sometimes a coarser hand interposed, and sometimes he caught a countenance that was not concealed, but was ever strange. He had a vague impression that they examined and dressed his wounds, and arranged his bandages; but whether he really had wounds, and whether he were or were not bandaged, he hardly knew, and did not care to know. He was not capable of thought, and memory was an effort under which he always broke down. Day after day he remained silent and almost motionless alike in mind and body. He had a vague feeling that, after some great sorrows, and some great trials, he was in stillness and in safety; and he had an indefinite mysterious sentiment of gratitude to some unknown power, that had cherished him in his dark calamities, and poured balm and oil into his wounds.

It was in this mood of apathy that, one evening, there broke upon his ear low but beautiful voices performing the evening service of the Church. His eye glistened, his heart was touched by the vesper spell. He listened with rapt attention to the sweet and sacred strains, and when they died away he felt depressed. Would they ever sound again?

Sooner than he could have hoped, for, when he woke in the morning from his slumbers, which, strange to say, were always disturbed, for the mind and the memory seemed to work at night, though in fearful and exhausting chaos, the same divine mel-

odies that had soothed him in the eve, now sounded in the glad and grateful worship of matin praise.

'I have heard the voice of angels,' he murmured to his veiled attendant.

The vesper and the matin hours became at once the epochs of his day. He was ever thinking of them, and soon was thinking of the feelings which their beautiful services celebrate and express. His mind seemed no longer altogether a blank, and the religious sentiment was the first that returned to his exhausted heart.

'There will be a requiem to-day,' whispered one of his veiled attendants.

A requiem! a service for the dead; a prayer for their peace and rest! and who was dead? the bright, the matchless one, the spell and fascination of his life! Was it possible? Could she be dead, who seemed vitality in its consummate form? Was there ever such a being as Theodora? And if there were no Theodora on earth, why should one think of anything but heaven?

The sounds came floating down the chamber till they seemed to cluster round his brain; sometimes solemn, sometimes thrilling, sometimes the divine pathos melting the human heart with celestial sympathy and heavenly solace. The tears fell fast from his agitated vision, and he sank back exhausted, almost insensible on his pillow.

'The Church has a heart for all our joys and all our sorrows, and for all our hopes and all our fears,' whispered a veiled attendant, as she bathed his temples with fragrant waters.

Though the condition of Lothair had at first seemed desperate, his youthful and vigorous frame

had enabled him to rally, and with time and the infinite solicitude which he received, his case was not without hope. But though his physical cure was somewhat advanced, the prostration of his mind seemed susceptible of no relief. The services of the Church accorded with his depressed condition; they were the only events of his life, and he cherished them. His attendants now permitted and even encouraged him to speak, but he seemed entirely incurious and indifferent. Sometimes they read to him, and he listened, but he never made remarks. The works which they selected had a religious or ecclesiastical bias, even while they were imaginative; and it seemed difficult not to be interested by the ingenious fancy by which it was worked out, that everything that was true and sacred in heaven had its symbol and significance in the qualities and accidents of earth.

After a month passed in this manner, the surgeons having announced that Lothair might now prepare to rise from his bed, a veiled attendant said to him one day, 'There is a gentleman here who is a friend of yours, and who would like to see you. And perhaps you would like to see him also for other reasons, for you must have much to say to God after all that you have suffered. And he is a most holy man.'

'I have no wish to see anyone. Are you sure he is not a stranger?' asked Lothair.

'He is in the next room,' said the attendant. 'He has been here throughout your illness, conducting our services; often by your bedside when you were asleep, and always praying for you.'

The veiled attendant drew back and waved her hand, and some one glided forward and said in a low, soft voice, 'You have not forgotten me?'

And Lothair beheld Monsignore Catesby.

'It is a long time since we met,' said Lothair, looking at him with some scrutiny, and then all interest died away, and he turned away his vague and wandering eyes.

'But you know me?'

'I know not where I am, and I but faintly comprehend what has happened,' murmured Lothair.

'You are among friends,' said the Monsignore, in tones of sympathy.

'What has happened,' he added, with an air of mystery, not unmixed with a certain expression of ecstasy in his glance, 'must be reserved for other times, when you are stronger, and can grapple with such high themes.'

'How long have I been here?' enquired Lothair, dreamingly.

'It is a month since the Annunciation.'

'What Annunciation?'

'Hush!' said the Monsignore, and he raised his finger to his lip. 'We must not talk of these things, at least at present. No doubt the same blessed person that saved you from the jaws of death is at this moment guarding over your recovery and guiding it; but we do not deserve, nor does the Church expect, perpetual miracles. We must avail ourselves, under Divine sanction, of the beneficent tendencies of Nature; and in your case her operations must not be disturbed at this moment by any excitement, except, indeed, the glow of gratitude for celestial aid, and the inward joy which must permeate the being of anyone who feels that he is among the most favoured of men.'

From this time Monsignore Catesby scarcely ever

quitted Lothair. He hailed Lothair in the morn, and parted from him at night with a blessing; and in the interval Catesby devoted his whole life, and the inexhaustible resources of his fine and skilled intelligence to alleviate or amuse the existence of his companion. Sometimes he conversed with Lothair, adroitly taking the chief burthen of the talk; and yet, whether it were bright narrative or lively dissertation, never seeming to lecture or hold forth, but relieving the monologue when expedient by an interesting enquiry, which he was always ready in due time to answer himself, or softening the instruction by the playfulness of his mind and manner. Sometimes he read to Lothair, and attuned the mind of his charge to the true spiritual note by melting passages from À Kempis or Chrysostom. Then he would bring a portfolio of wondrous drawings by the mediæval masters, of saints and seraphs, and accustom the eye and thought of Lothair to the forms and fancies of the Court of Heaven.

One day Lothair, having risen from his bed for the first time, and lying on a sofa in an adjoining chamber to that in which he had been so long confined, the Monsignore seated himself by the side of Lothair, and, opening a portfolio, took out a drawing and held it before Lothair, observing his countenance with a glance of peculiar scrutiny.

'Well!' said Catesby after some little pause, as if awaiting a remark from his companion.

''Tis beautiful!' said Lothair. 'Is it by Raffaelle?'

'No; by Fra Bartolomeo. But the countenance, do you remember ever having met such an one?'

Lothair shook his head. Catesby took out another drawing, the same subject, the Blessed Virgin. 'By

Giulio,' said the Monsignore, and he watched the face of Lothair, but it was listless.

Then he showed Lothair another and another and another. At last he held before him one which was really by Raffaelle, and by which Lothair was evidently much moved. His eye lit up, a blush suffused his pale cheek, he took the drawing himself and held it before his gaze with a trembling hand.

'Yes, I remember this,' he murmured, for it was one of those faces of Greek beauty which the great painter not infrequently caught up at Rome. The Monsignore looked gently round and waved his hand, and immediately there arose the Hymn to the Virgin in subdued strains of exquisite melody.

On the next morning, when Lothair woke, he found on the table by his side the drawing of the Virgin in a sliding frame.

About this time the Monsignore began to accustom Lothair to leave his apartment, and as he was not yet permitted to walk, Catesby introduced what he called an English chair, in which Lothair was enabled to survey a little the place which had been to him a refuge and a home. It seemed a building of vast size, raised round an inner court with arcades and windows, and, in the higher story where he resided, an apparently endless number of chambers and galleries. One morning, in their perambulations, the Monsignore unlocked the door of a covered way which had no light but from a lamp which guided their passage. The opposite door at the end of this covered way opened into a church, but one of a character different from any which Lothair had yet entered.

It had been raised during the latter half of the sixteenth century by Vignola, when, under the influence

of the great Pagan revival, the Christian Church began to assume the character of an Olympian temple. A central painted cupola of large but exquisite proportions, supported by pilasters with gilded capitals, and angels of white marble springing from golden brackets; walls encrusted with rare materials of every tint, and altars supported by serpentine columns of agate and alabaster; a blaze of pictures, and statues, and precious stones, and precious metals, denoted one of the chief temples of the sacred brotherhood of Jesus, raised when the great order had recognised that the views of primitive and mediæval Christianity, founded on the humility of man, were not in accordance with the age of confidence in human energy, in which they were destined to rise, and which they were determined to direct.

Guided by Catesby, and leaning on a staff, Lothair gained a gorgeous side chapel in which mass was celebrating; the air was rich with incense, and all heaven seemed to open in the ministrations of a seraphic choir. Crushed by his great calamities, both physical and moral, Lothair sometimes felt that he could now be content if the rest of his life could flow away amid this celestial fragrance and these gushing sounds of heavenly melody. And absorbed in these feelings it was not immediately observed by him that on the altar, behind the dazzling blaze of tapers, was a picture of the Virgin, and identically the same countenance as that he had recognised with emotion in the drawing of Raffaelle.

It revived perplexing memories which agitated him, thoughts on which it seemed his brain had not now strength enough to dwell, and yet with which it now seemed inevitable for him to grapple. The

congregation was not very numerous, and when it broke up, several of them lingered behind and whispered to the Monsignore, and then, after a little time, Catesby approached Lothair and said, 'There are some here who would wish to kiss your hand, or even touch the hem of your garments. It is troublesome, but natural, considering all that has occurred and that this is the first time, perhaps, that they may have met anyone who has been so favoured.'

'Favoured!' said Lothair; 'am I favoured? It seems to me I am the most forlorn of men, if even I am that.'

'Hush!' said the Monsignore, 'we must not talk of these things at present;' and he motioned to some who approached and contemplated Lothair with blended curiosity and reverence.

These visits of Lothair to the beautiful church of the Jesuits became of daily occurrence, and often happened several times on the same day; indeed they formed the only incident which seemed to break his listlessness. He became interested in the change and variety of the services, in the persons and characters of the officiating priests. The soft manners of these fathers, their intelligence in the performance of their offices, their obliging carriage, and the unaffected concern with which all he said or did seemed to inspire them, won upon him unconsciously. The Church had become his world; and his sympathies, if he still had sympathies, seemed confined to those within its walls.

In the meantime his physical advancement though slow was gradual, and had hitherto never been arrested. He could even walk a little alone, though artificially supported, and rambled about the halls

and galleries full of a prodigious quantity of pictures, from the days of Raffaelle Sanzio to those of Raffaelle Mengs.

'The doctors think now we might try a little drive,' said the Monsignore one morning. 'The rains have ceased and refreshed everything. To-day is like the burst of spring.' And when Lothair seemed to shudder at the idea of facing anything like the external world, the Monsignore suggested immediately that they should go out in a close carriage, which they finally entered in the huge quadrangle of the building. Lothair was so nervous that he pulled down even the blind of his window; and the Monsignore, who always humoured him, half pulled down his own.

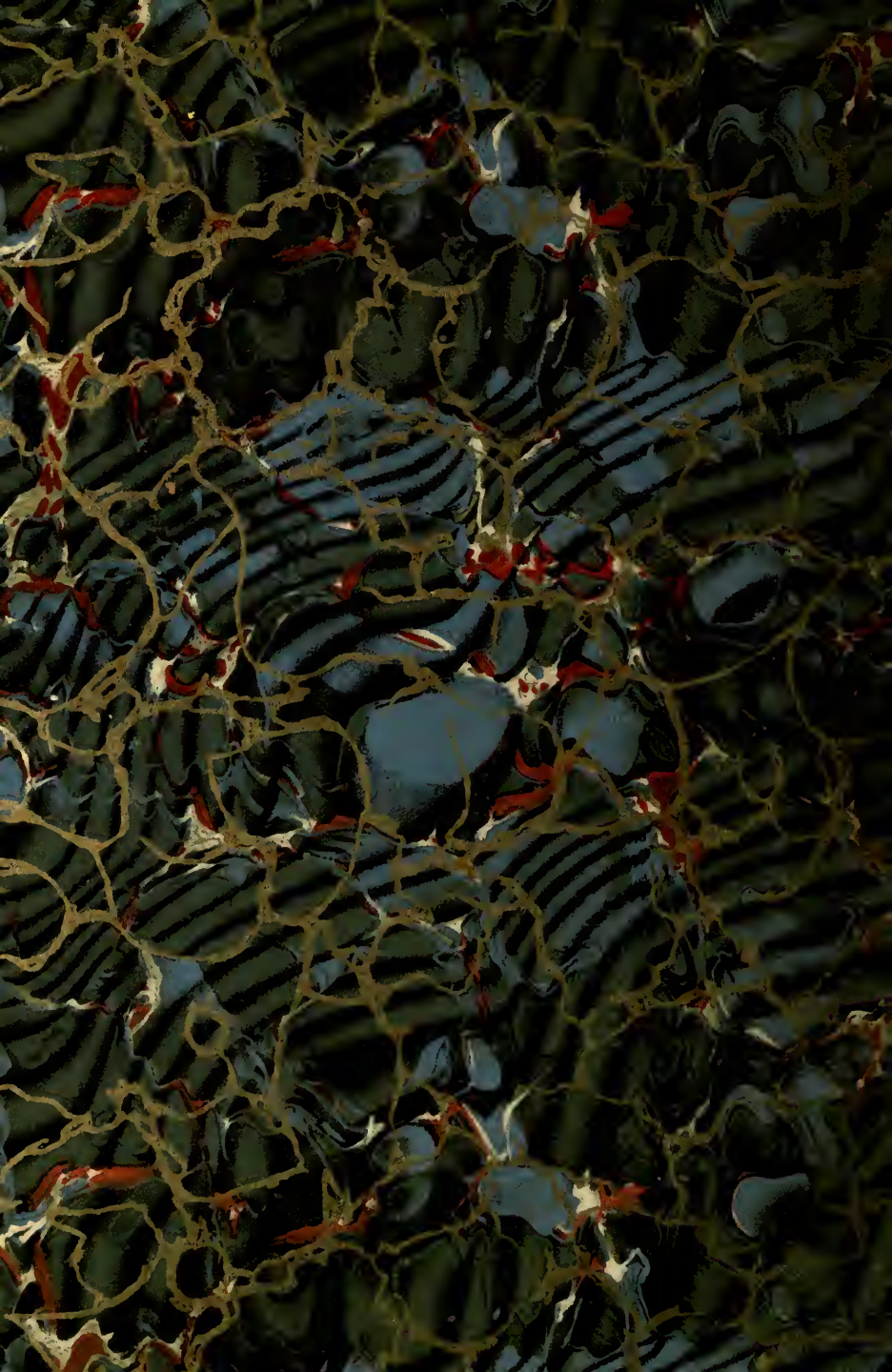
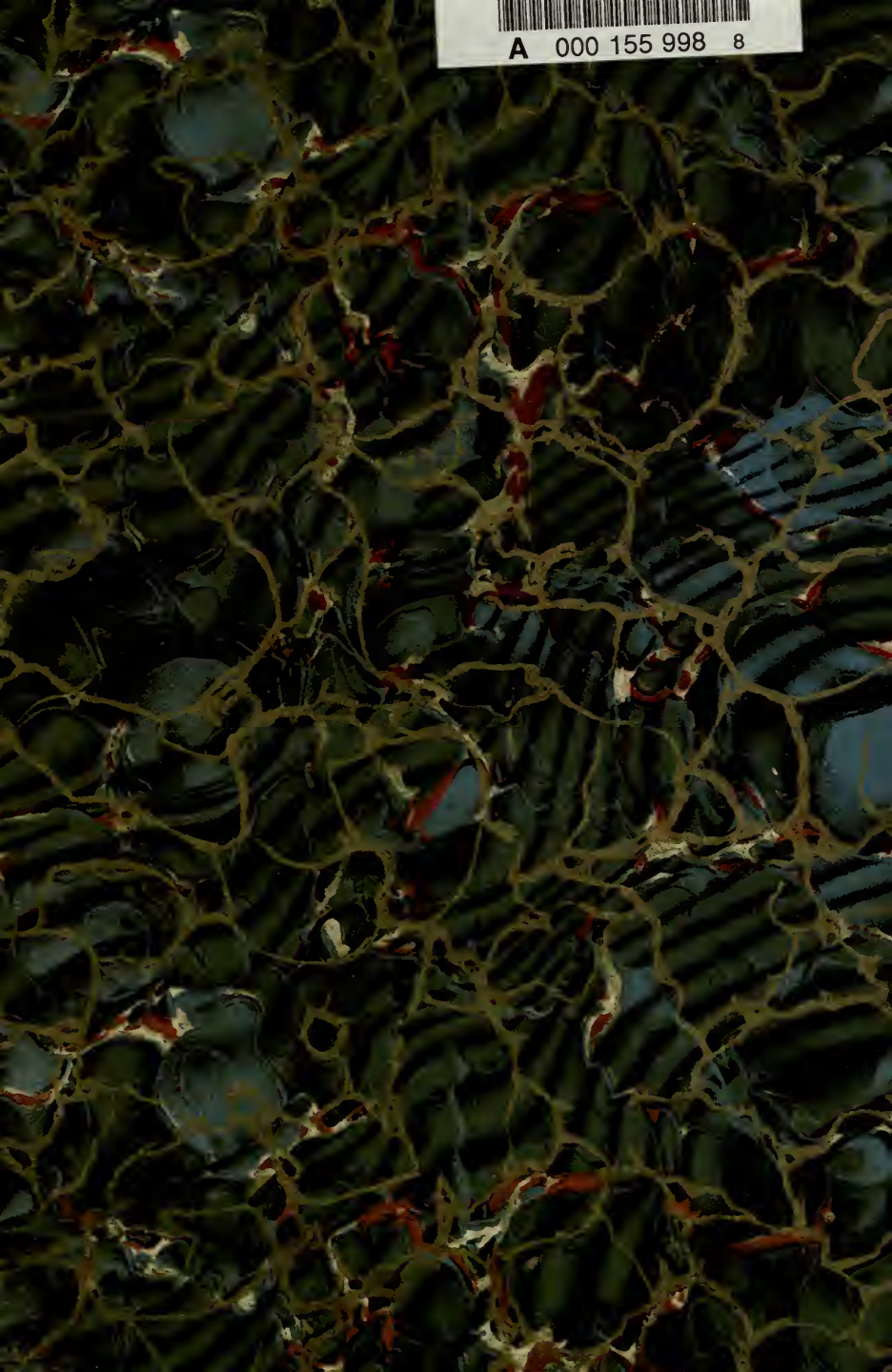
Their progress seemed through a silent land and they could hardly be traversing streets. Then the ascent became a little precipitous, and the carriage stopped and the Monsignore said, 'Here is a solitary spot. We shall meet no one. The view is charming, and the air is soft.' And he placed his hand gently on the arm of Lothair, and, as it were, drew him out of the carriage.

The sun was bright, and the sky was bland. There was something in the breath of nature that was delightful. The scent of violets was worth all the incense in the world; all the splendid marbles and priestly vestments seemed hard and cold when compared with the glorious colours of the cactus and the wild forms of the golden and gigantic aloea. The Favonian breeze played on the brow of this beautiful hill, and the exquisite palm trees, while they bowed their rustling heads, answered in responsive chorus to the antiphon of nature.

The dreary look that had been so long imprinted on the face of Lothair melted away.

'Tis well that we came, is it not?' said Catesby; 'and now we will seat ourselves.' Below and before them, on an undulating site, a city of palaces and churches spread out its august form, enclosing within its ample walls sometimes a wilderness of classic ruins, column and arch and theatre, sometimes the umbrageous spread of princely gardens. A winding and turbid river divided the city in unequal parts, in one of which there rose a vast and glorious temple, crowned with a dome of almost superhuman size and skill, on which the favourite sign of heaven flashed with triumphant truth.

The expression of relief which, for a moment, had reposed on the face of Lothair, left it when he said in an agitated voice, 'I at length behold Rome!'



A 000 155 998 8